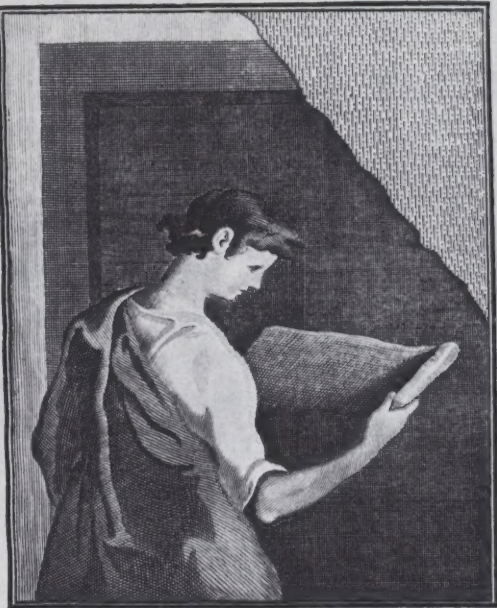
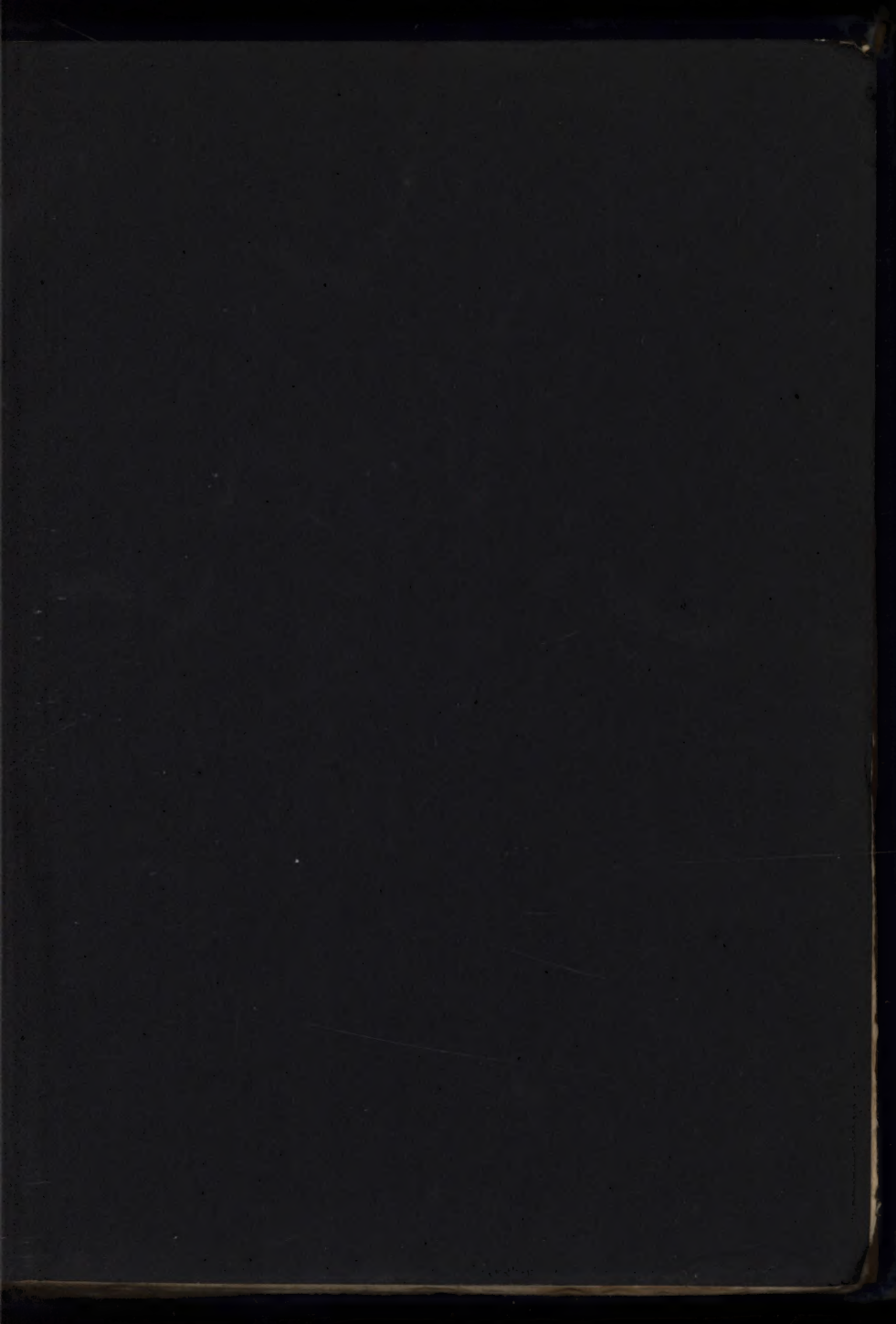


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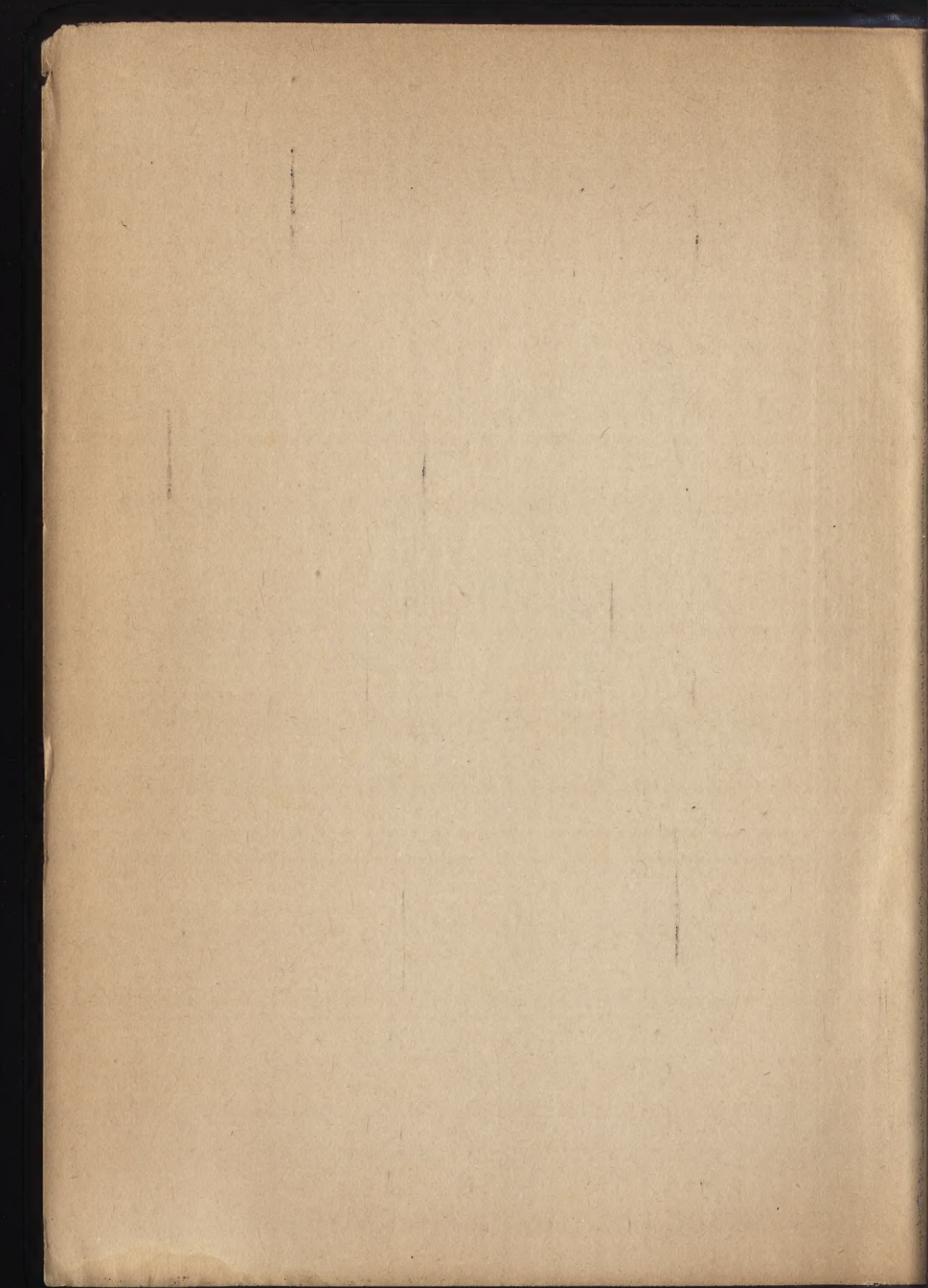
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EDITED BY JAMES A. MANSON

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A.

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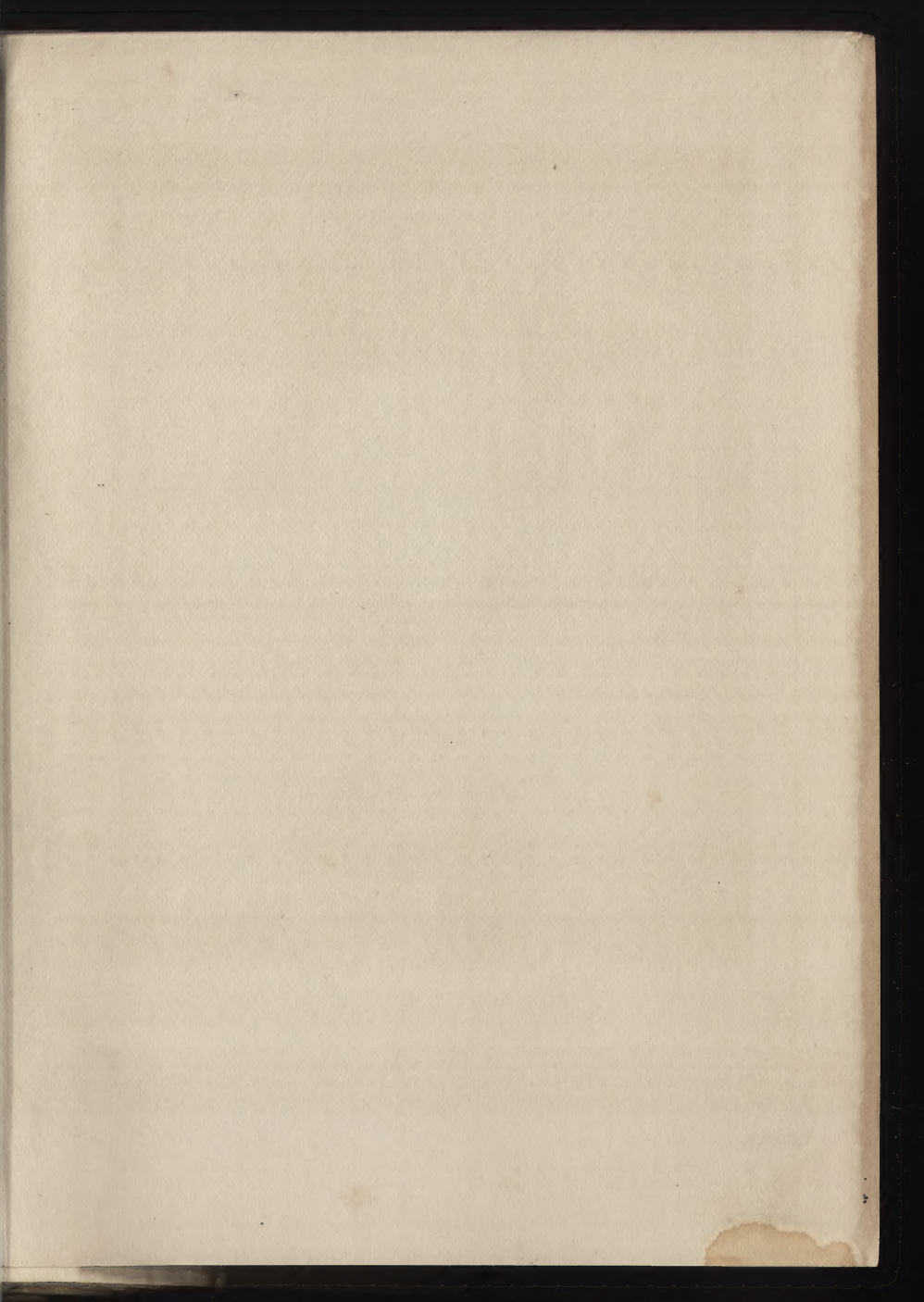
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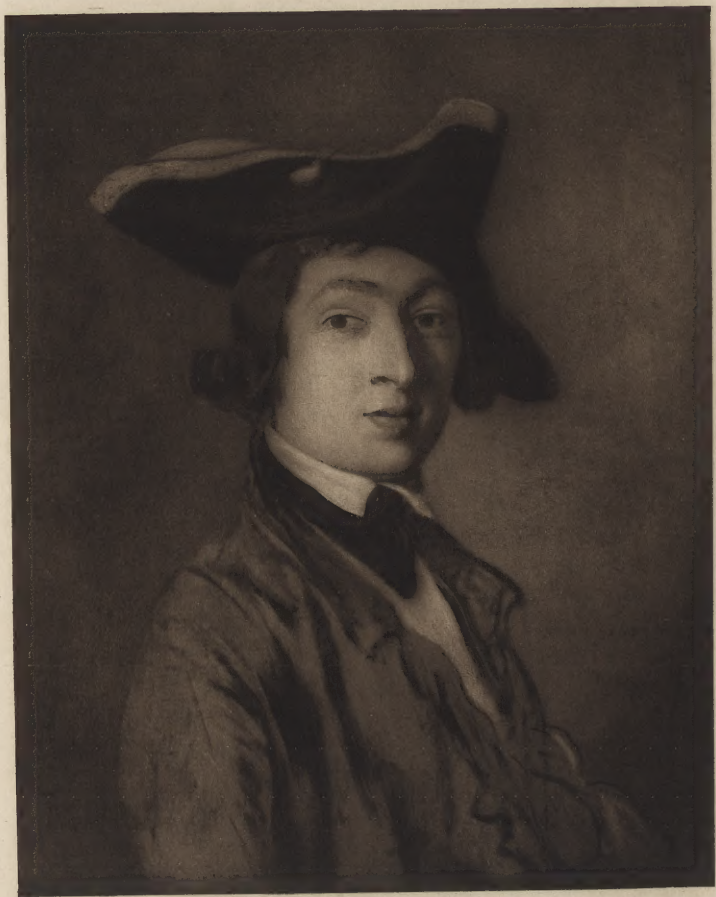
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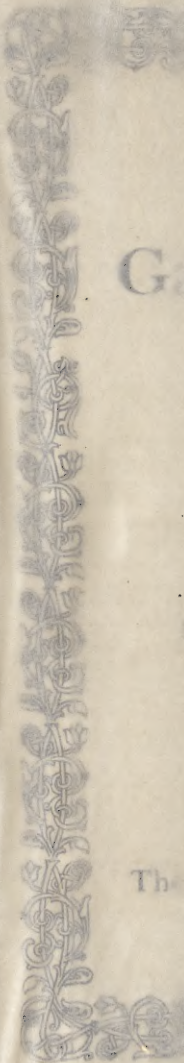






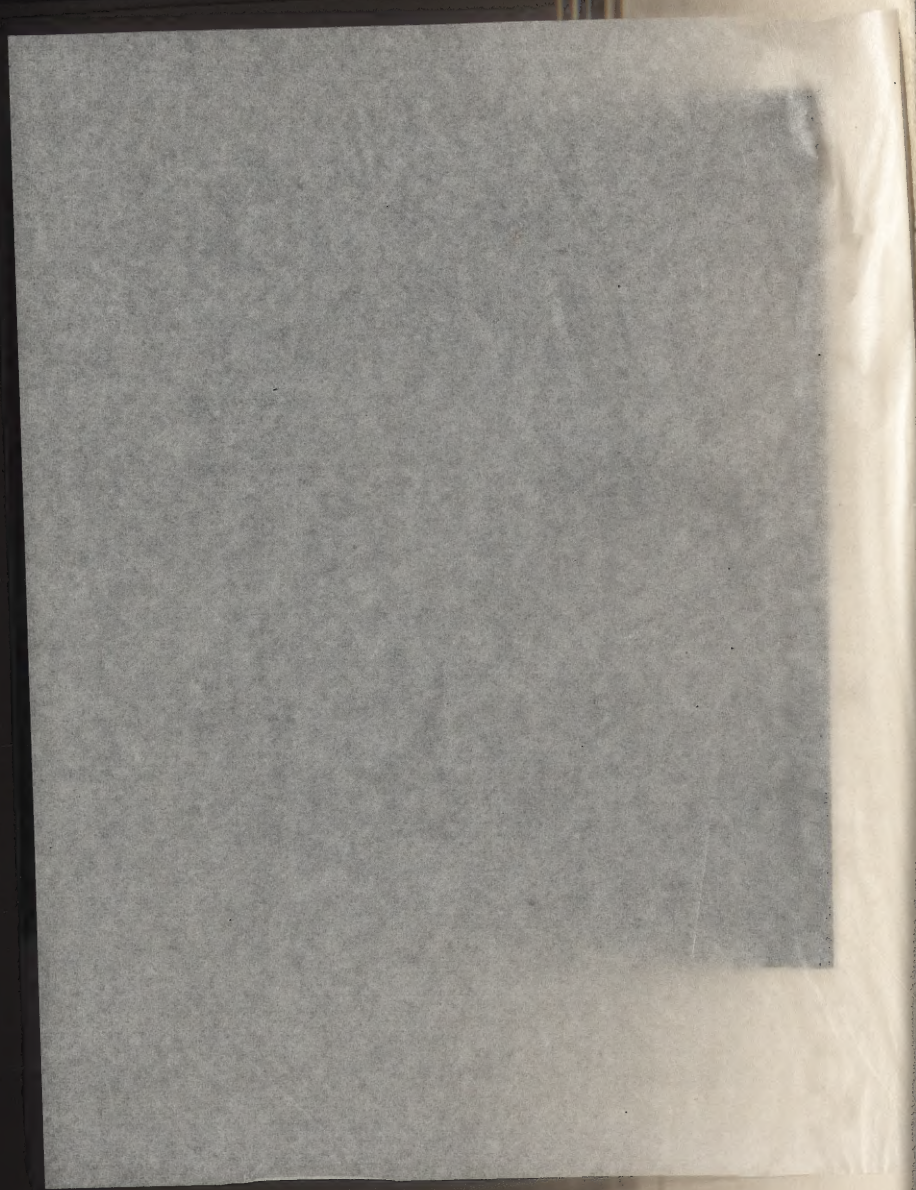
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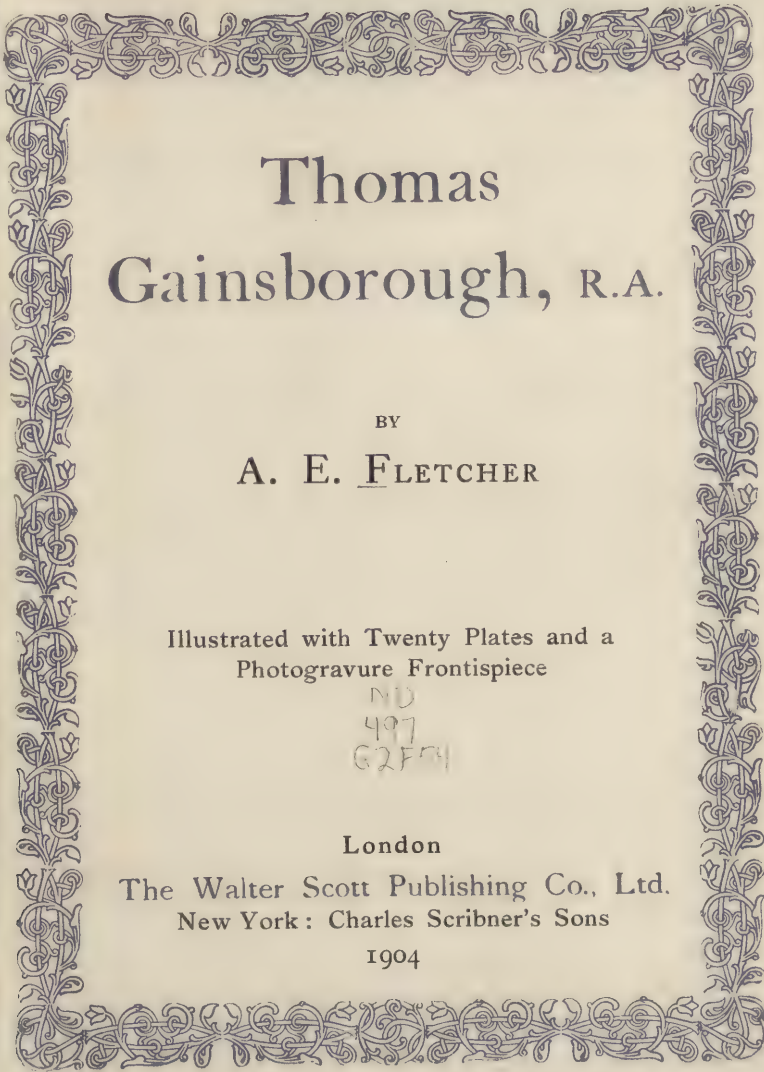


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BY  
A. E. FLETCHER

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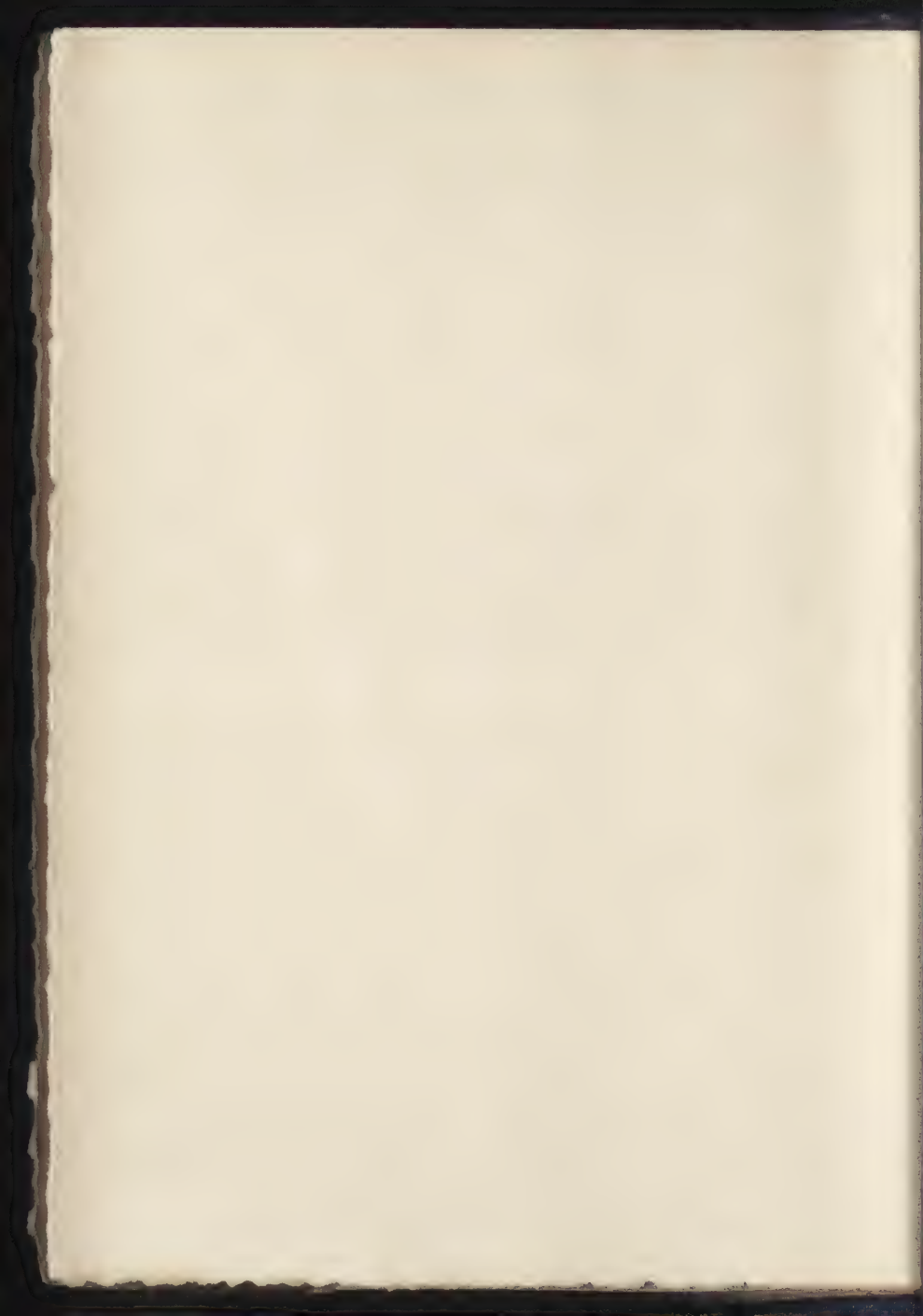
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TO  
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MAZZINI'S FRIEND,  
FELIX MOSCHELES,  
ARTIST AND SOCIAL REFORMER,  
I DEDICATE  
THE FOLLOWING PAGES IN REMEMBRANCE  
OF MANY KINDNESSES.

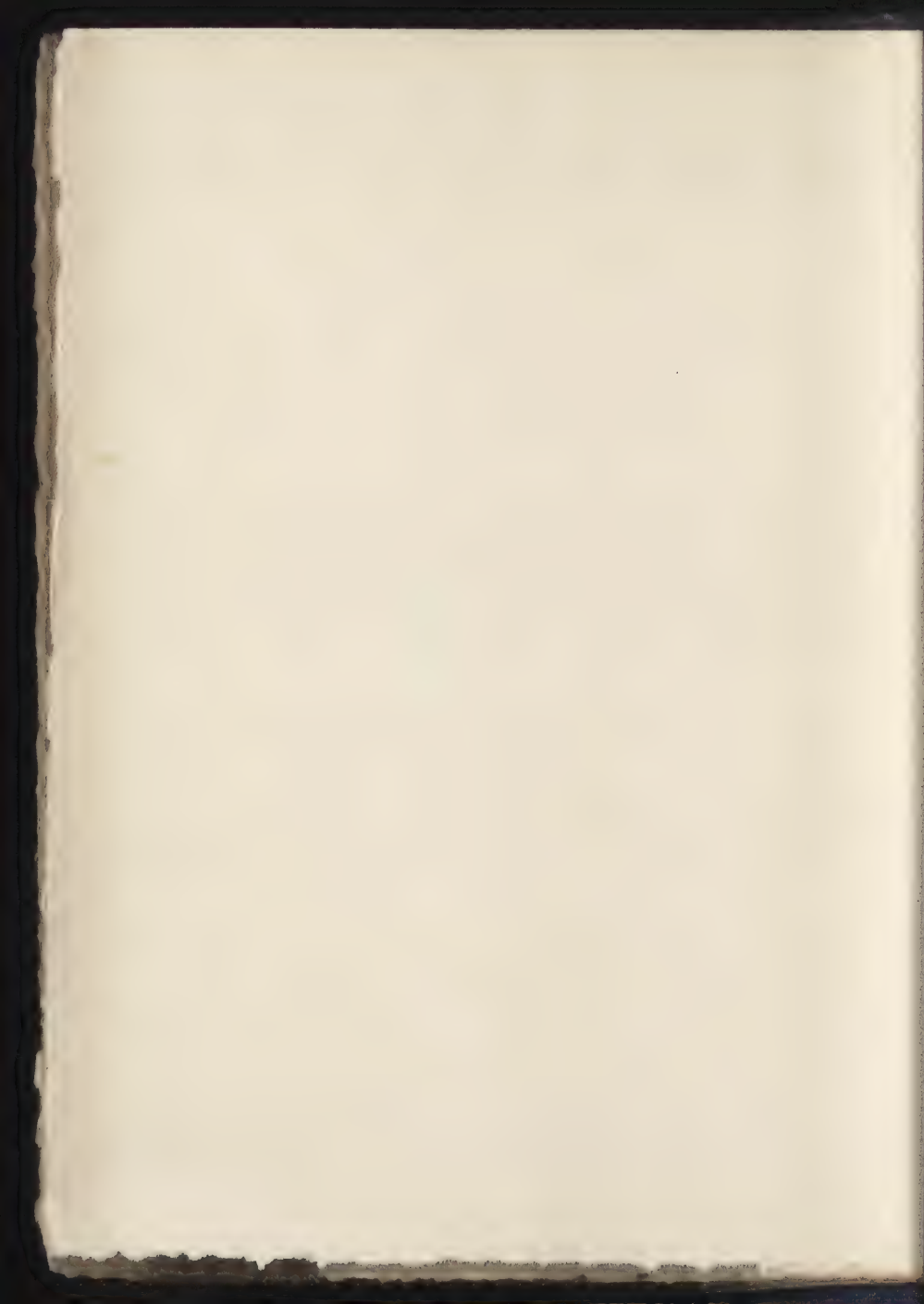




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IN addition to the authors of the various works mentioned in the fifth Appendix, I am indebted for much valuable assistance in the preparation of the following pages to the Rev. J. J. Jones, Vicar of St. Peter's, Sudbury; the Rev. T. G. Boyne, Minister of the Congregational Church, Friars Street, Sudbury; the Hon. F. Leveson-Gower, Mr. J. Henwood Thomas, Mr. Hans Braekstad, Mr. A. S. Forrest, and Mr. Beaumont Fletcher.





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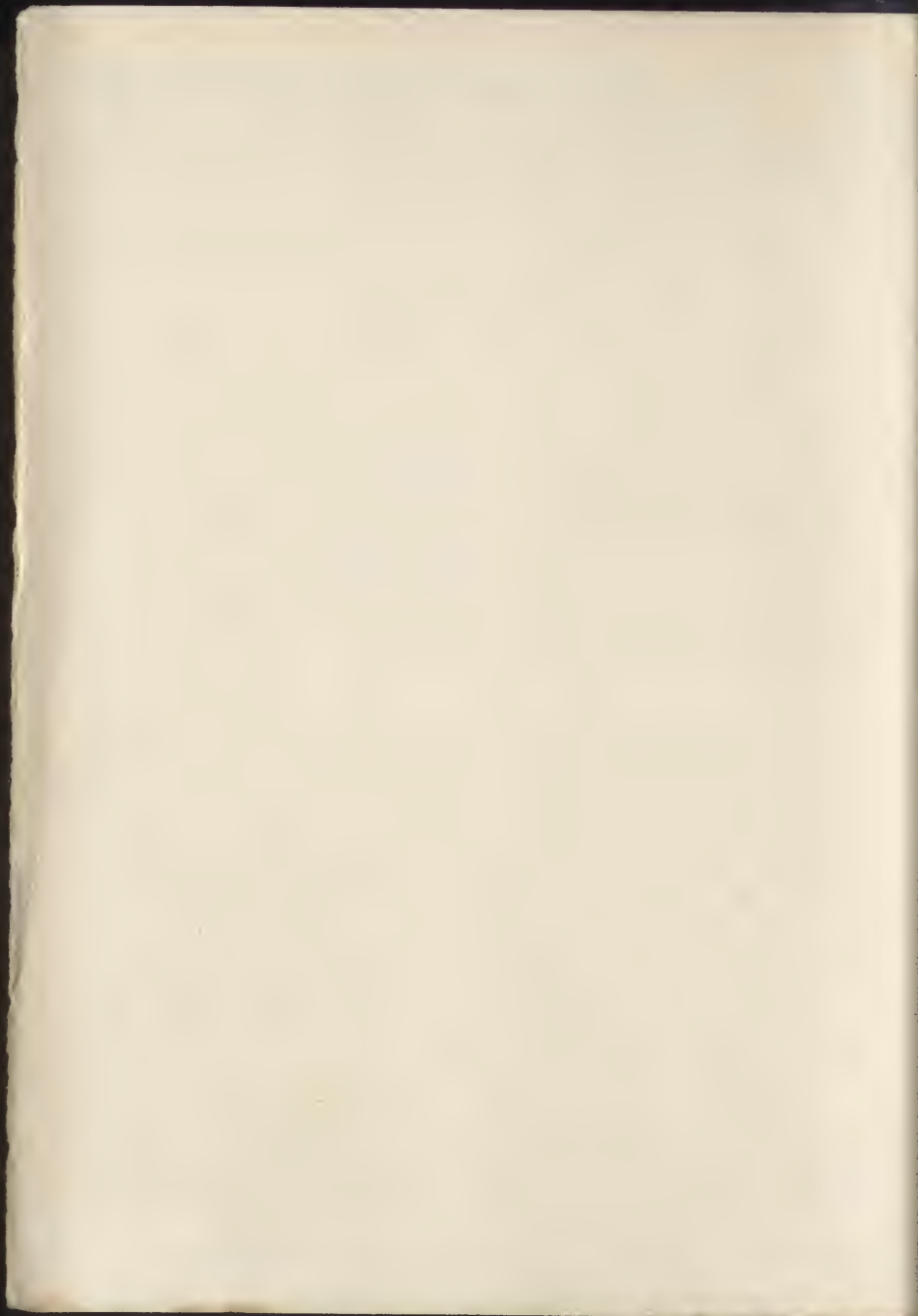
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## CHAPTER I.

### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES.

East Anglia—Fenland—The founders of English landscape-painting—Sudbury—William Jenkyn, martyr—The painter's grandfather—Puritan by blood—Puritanism—The charge of Philistinism—Cavaliers and art—Roundheads and art—Degradation of taste—A great impressionist—A new revelation—Feeling for Nature—Thomson's *Seasons*.

No part of England is more interesting than East Anglia, as regards both its natural features and its historic associations. It lies between the estuaries of the Ouse and the Orwell, and contains the brightest and breeziest of all English counties. Though it has a lower rainfall than the rest of the United Kingdom, it is amply watered by magnificent lakes, broads, and navigable rivers. Emerald and white, azure and gold are the prevailing colours of its coast-line, washed by the North Sea's foam and broken by sand-dunes, chalk, and red and yellow sand cliffs. Nowhere has Nature been more

*East  
Anglia*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

lavish of colour than in this picturesque region, within the shadow of whose old grey churches, crowning its wooded uplands or nestling in its valleys, sleep generations of men who played their parts in some of the most eventful scenes in the national drama. Hither in the sixth century came the tribes that gave to England her name. Here centuries later settled the great migration of Flemings who laid the foundations of England's textile industries; and here, too, at the most memorable and stormiest period in the Island story, was formed that famous Eastern Counties' Association which fostered the Puritan revolution and raised for Cromwell the flower of that army of stalwarts "whose backs no enemy ever saw."

Picturesque East Anglia lies towards the sea. The country westward widens out into the great plateau of the Fens; but even these lonely fenlands have a beauty of their own. The wayfarer there breathes *Fenland* the air of boundless freedom. His outlook is on far horizons. He has the open sky above him, with cloud-scenery, sunrise, and sunset of surpassing splendour. Here, too, at night, especially during the long winter nights, above the purity of untrodden snows, the heavens are aglow more brilliantly than elsewhere with the light of rolling systems moving on in their eternal silences.

It was in accordance with the fitness of things that East Anglia should be the home of the founders of English landscape-painting — Gainsborough, Crome, Cotman, and Constable. Crome and Cotman caught

## Suffolk Scenery

their inspiration from the scenery in the neighbourhood of romantic Norwich, Crome's native city. Gainsborough and Constable, who were born within a few miles of each other in Suffolk, garnered their first "harvest of a quiet eye" in the valley of the Stour. A greater pictorial interpreter of Nature even than they, namely Turner, also looked with a poet's eye on East Anglian scenery. His "Ship in Distress off Yarmouth" is one of the grandest pictures ever painted.

Not only the scenery around his native Sudbury, but also the history and traditions of the old borough, must be considered amongst the formative influences that shaped the genius and character

of Gainsborough. Many stories of the stirring scenes which his grandfather, the Head Constable of Sudbury, had witnessed must have been told him in his childhood by his parents and other members of the old meeting-house where the Gainsboroughs had their family pew. East Anglia was the headquarters of the Puritan revolt, and Sudbury went strong for Puritanism. The Great Friars Street Chapel is one of the oldest Free Churches in England, and was founded during the Civil War. The worshippers there were frequently addressed by Puritan notabilities, amongst them William Jenkyn, a native of Sudbury, and martyred son of a family of martyrs. Fuller, in his

*The  
Founders  
of English  
Landscape-  
painting*

*Sudbury*

*William  
Jenkyn,  
Martyr*

*Worthies,*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

joyning of a broken soul, and at staying of a doubtful conscience." He was for some time vicar of Christ Church, Newgate, and suffered for his opinions both under the Commonwealth and at the Restoration. In 1684 he was arrested at Moorfields and sent to Newgate. When a petition for his release, on account of his advanced age and severe sufferings, was sent to King James I., his Majesty replied, "Jenkyn shall be a prisoner as long as he lives." A few months later a lord-in-waiting said to the King, "May it please your Majesty, Jenkyn has got his liberty." Upon which the King asked with surprise, "Ay! who gave it to him?" The courtier replied, "A greater than your Majesty—the King of kings." Jenkyn is the subject of a poem by Francis Quarles, beginning—

"Fool that I was, to think my easy pen  
Had strength enough to glorify the fame  
Of this known author; this rare man of men."

It is not known how long Gainsborough's grandfather had settled in Sudbury before he became Head Constable, but he could hardly have been appointed to so important an office if he had not been there a long time. Hence there can be little doubt that he had heard Jenkyn preach at Friars Street. Doubtless, too, he saw the troop of cavalry raised by Sir Brampton Gurdon, member for the borough, march out of Sudbury to join Cromwell's "New Model" army at Naseby. The

*The  
Painter's  
Grand-  
father*



## Puritan Ancestry

Nonconformist traditions of the Gainsborough family were not dishonoured by the artist and his brothers. One of them became an Independent minister, and the artist himself fostered an affection for the old chapel up to the end of his life. He occasionally visited his native place after he became famous, and has left on record how he once went to hear his brother preach there, also, how the sermon "delighted the folk hugely." In 1775 we hear of the painter, then at the height of his fame, again worshipping with the congregation in Great Friars Street, and, though speaking of the Rev. Mr. Ray, the preacher, as "a very worthy minister," he adds regretfully that "the Meeting is at a low ebb." From his Puritan forbears Gainsborough inherited a fine character. *Puritan by Blood* He was an Independent in the broadest meaning of that term. "He had," said Northcote, "the saving grace of originality; and you cannot put him down for that reason." He cared even less for the conventions of Society than for the canons of the art critics, and never became a darling of the *salons*. He did not court the society of the grandees whose portraits he painted, and even at Buckingham House he let his royal sitters clearly understand that he expected to be treated as a gentleman, and not as a sycophant or a buffoon. His love of music and of the society of musicians was another of his inheritances from Puritanism, as also was his sadness—the poetic melancholy which pervades his best pictures and made them appeal so powerfully to Constable.

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

Not enough, I think, has been made of Gainsborough's indebtedness to the Puritan spirit, which we know had pervaded his home for at least two generations before he was born. To most critics no doubt it seems absurd to imagine that great art can be associated with Puritanism. Nonconformity has been charged with unloveliness, and the British public for the most part were rather taken aback when the newspapers announced a few years ago that the register of Gainsborough's birth had been unearthed from the archives of a Nonconformist chapel. The statement seemed so incredible to some Gainsborough admirers who wished to examine the document, that they called at the vicarage, not at the Congregational minister's manse, to ask permission to see it.

I have never been able to understand why a man of critical insight and catholic sympathies like Matthew Arnold entirely failed to estimate the spirit of Puritanism of Puritanism at its right value. "The great English middle class," he said, "the kernel of the nation, the class whose intelligent sympathy had upheld a Shakespeare, entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon its spirit there for two hundred years." "If," he continues, "the lower classes in this country [England] have utterly abandoned the dogmas of Christianity, and the upper classes its practice, the cause lies very much in the impossible and unlovely presentment of Christian dogmas and practice which is offered by the most important part

## Middle-class Puritanism

of the nation, the serious middle class, and above all by its Nonconforming portion."

Puritanism is not to blame for this. It was Puritanism of the middle-class Gainsborough family type which kept alive religious feeling in England at a time when the Church was crushing it out. The Puritans were not responsible for the degraded condition into which the Church fell up to the time of the Oxford revival. Sir Joshua Fitch, Matthew Arnold's colleague and admirer, has pointed out, in reply to his criticism of the Puritans, that a great wave of irreligion and profligacy burst over English society in the latter half of the seventeenth century and well-nigh submerged all the best elements of the national character. But it was the Puritans who breasted that wave. The vices of the Restoration were the vices mainly of the Court and of the aristocracy. The scum rose to the top. "Down deeper lay the great solid mass of Puritan England, and in this the inbred probity, self-respect, and sense of righteousness remained for the most part uninfluenced by the wildness and licentiousness of the aristocracy. In like manner the eighteenth century saw in the Church of England decorum, learning, and many estimable qualities; but also coldness and a notable absence of religious fervour or of strong conviction. And it was to Wesley and Whitefield, and not to ecclesiastics in high places, that we owe the Evangelical revival of that century. We have, as a nation, been in fact saved from moral corruption in the seventeenth century, and from religious apathy and indifference in the eighteenth,

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

not by the influence of the educated and privileged classes, but by the great and steadfast qualities of that very class of British Philistines against whom Matthew Arnold directed all his earnest condemnation and all the lighter artillery of his sarcasm and his wit."

Moreover, we must bear in mind that the Church from the time of the passing of the Act of Uniformity had for nearly two hundred years a monopoly of the ancient universities, from which Nonconformists were rigorously excluded. It was not quite generous on the part of the "apostle of sweetness and light" to taunt

*The Charge of Philistinism* the Nonconformists with their Philistinism, when the heavily endowed centres of national culture were closed to them. Matthew Arnold himself, before taking his degree at Oxford, had to declare his assent to certain

theological dogmas which he very soon afterwards discarded. Gainsborough would have been refused admission to the sacred precincts of Oxford had he applied for it; so would Robert Browning, the latest literary product of Puritanism, as Milton was the earliest. Though Browning was the son of pious Congregational parents of plebeian Camberwell, no Philistinism ever invaded his home. Even as he lay in his cradle, his father used to sing him to sleep with snatches from Anacreon. The charge of Philistinism can be brought with greater justice against the Church party than against the Nonconformists. The earlier Puritans, as Dr. Byington has pointed out, did not break with the harmless gaieties of the world about



## Puritan Graces

them. Milton was skilled in all manly exercises, and was a fine musician. Colonel Hutchinson was a lover of dance and song, "often diverting himself with a violin, which he played masterfully." The beautiful letters of John Winthrop to his wife reveal to us the purity, the refinement, and the culture characteristic of the homes of the early Puritans. Macaulay's sneer that the Puritans hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators, is a libel. They did not object to the healthy sports and rational recreations of the people. What they did object to was the policy of the Stuart kings, who, following the example of the Roman emperors, tried to divert public attention from serious political problems by providing the people with degrading public amusements. At a time when the clergy were compelled to read *The Book of Sports* from their pulpits the Puritan protest was justifiable. Had the plays of the dramatists who followed Shakespeare been such as decent people could witness, the Puritans would not have objected to them. As a matter of fact, the first English opera was performed under the Commonwealth; and it is to Cromwell himself that we are indebted for the preservation of the Raphael cartoons for the nation. Nor did the Puritans adopt what Matthew Arnold calls the unlovely form of public worship until they were convinced that the High Church party were making use of music and art as a substitute for true religious life. They themselves had a great belief in devotional music, and in fact have

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

been ridiculed as psalm-singers. The charge of desecrating the churches which has been brought against Cromwell and his soldiery can more justly be brought against the other Cromwell—Henry VIII.'s Cromwell, whose hand lay particularly heavy on East Anglia. He did not scruple to plunder Westminster Abbey, to rob even the shrine of Edward the Confessor of its golden ornaments, and melt them down to enrich the treasury of the "Defender of the Faith." That the Cavaliers cared as little for art as the Roundheads was evidently the opinion of Sir Walter Scott, who in *Woodstock* shows us the kind of pictures which adorned the walls of Charles I.'s loyal knights. When Jocelyn showed Independent Tomkins round the picture-galleries of Sir Henry Lee's mansion, he pointed with his leading-staff to one where "in such perspective as the artist possessed, were depicted the remains of a burning church, or monastery, and four or five soldiers in red cassocks, bearing away in triumph what seemed a brazen font or laver. Above their heads might be traced in scroll, *Lee victor sic voluit*. . . . The picture was one of those which, from something marked in the features and expression, attract the observation even of those who are ignorant of art. The Independent looked at it until a smile passed transiently over his clouded brow." The Puritan might well smile "to see the grim old Cavalier employed in desecrating a religious house."

Judging of the attitude of the Puritans to art, we must examine the state into which art had fallen even under

## Real Cavaliers

that supposed patron of art, Charles I. Shirley, the glorifier of adultery, was Charles's favourite dramatist. Ben Jonson declared that the writers who came immediately after Shakespeare were men whose manners and natures were inverted—"nothing remaining to them of the dignity of poet but the abused name, which every scribe usurps; that now especially in dramatik or (as they term it) stage poetry, nothing but ribaldry, profanation, blasphemies, all licence of offence towards God and man is practised." Let Churchmen decide, said Kingsley, which of the two was the better Churchman—Prynne, who tried to make the baptismal covenant mean something, or Laud, who allowed such a play as *The Ordinary* to be written by his special protégé, Cartwright, the Oxford scholar, and acted before him, probably by Oxford scholars, certainly by christened boys. "We do not pretend to pry into the counsels of the Most High!" exclaims Kingsley, with righteous indignation; "but if unfaithfulness to a high and holy trust, when combined with lofty professions and pretensions, does (as all history tells us that it does) draw down the vengeance of Almighty God, then we need look no farther than this one neglect of the seventeenth-century prelates (whether its cause was stupidity, insincerity, or fear of the monarchs to whose tyranny they pandered) to discover full reason why it pleased God to sweep them out awhile with the besom of destruction."

*Cavaliers  
and Art*

It has been contended, however, that the Puritans

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

were barbarians because they did not appreciate Shakespeare—because they did not understand high art. Here let Kingsley again answer for them. The fact was, he says, that the Puritans hated what art they saw in England, because it was low art, bad art, growing ever lower and worse. “If it be said that Shakespeare’s is the very highest art, the answer is that what they hated in him was not his high art, but his low art, the foul and horrible elements which he had in common with his brother-playwriters. True, there is far less of these elements in Shakespeare than in any of his compeers; but they are there. And what the Puritans hated in him was exactly what we have to expunge before we can now represent his plays. If it be said that they ought to have discerned and appreciated the higher elements in him, so ought the rest of their generation. The Puritans were surely not bound to see in Shakespeare what his patrons and brother-poets did not see. And it is surely a matter of fact, that the deep spiritual knowledge which makes and will make Shakespeare’s plays (and them alone of all the sixteenth and seventeenth-century plays) a heritage for all men and all ages, quite escaped the insight of his contemporaries, who probably put him in the same rank which Webster, writing in 1612, assigned to him.” The place assigned by Webster to Shakespeare was certainly not a high one. He put him in the same rank with Dekker and Heywood, whose names are now forgotten!



## Milton's View

I do not pretend that the Puritans were ardent votaries of æstheticism, but neither were the High Church party of their day. The Anglicans were the dominant party after the Restoration, and were themselves responsible for the decline of architecture and the general degradation of taste, which was at its worst under the first two Georges, until the new era in the history of British art was inaugurated by Gainsborough and his great contemporaries. Nor do I wish to imply that Gainsborough's art was the inevitable result of his Puritanic family history. He was more of a Bohemian than a Puritan in the vulgar meaning of the latter much-abused word, but it is impossible to assume that heredity had nothing to do with the moulding of his character and his genius. The true relation of Puritanism to art has been finely expressed by Milton. His remarks apply not only to literature but to all art, whether expressed in language or in colour, in marble or in sound. "I was confirmed in this opinion," he said, "that he who would not be frustrated of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem . . . not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that which is praiseworthy." In the Miltonic sense, every great artist is a Puritan. He feels intensely, and his feelings give wings to his imagination. The colours that glow upon his canvas are reflections of his own emotions.

*Degradation of Taste*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

"We receive but what we give,  
And in ourselves alone doth Nature live."

That is essentially true of Gainsborough. He was a great impressionist in the right meaning of that term.

*A Great Impressionist* He revealed his own fine character and noble conceptions in the nobility of his work. A man must have greatness in his soul to produce great work—a truth to which Browning has given expression in *Andrea del Sarto*. Wonderful pictures, no doubt, have been painted by men of fine imagination without fine character. Such pictures, however, are merely splendid deformities. They never can be ranked above the works of inferior artists. To such artists life is a troubled sea, casting up at best but weeds and wreckage. To the great artist also life is a troubled sea, storm-swept by blasts before which stately galleons go down, but whose tides nevertheless are swayed by influences of the heavenly bodies, silent, mysterious, irresistible.

Gainsborough came into the world at a time when a great change was taking place in the minds of men with regard to their conceptions of external nature. Thomson in England, while the painter was in his cradle, and Jean Jacques Rousseau in France a little later, gave to the world a new revelation—a revelation of the wonder and the glory of the universe. Thomson's *Seasons* and Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* are now little read except by the curious student. They are too verbose for an

## Return to Nature

age which is becoming more and more conscious of the flight of time. But when they were first published they made a profound impression. They pioneered the movement towards a return to Nature, and fostered that love of the picturesque and consciousness of cosmic vitality to which afterwards Wordsworth in poetry and Turner in painting were to give the highest artistic expression. Poets and painters before Thomson and Rousseau (I regard Rousseau as a prose-poet) were not altogether destitute of feeling for the beauty of natural objects. They had an intense love for the flora and fauna of the districts in which they were born. The song of birds, the balmy breath of flowers, appealed strongly to their emotions, but they had no sympathy with Nature in her severer aspects. They seem to have regarded the outside world as a mass of dead rather than of living matter. Though they occasionally gave glimpses of idyllic rural scenes, Nature-worship was quite subordinate in their poetical creed. They dealt chiefly with dramatic incident, with religious, social, and political phenomena, and with the life and movement of men in the Court, the camp, the field. The majesty of mountain and torrent scenery did not appeal to them, and they caught little or no inspiration from the "murmur of the forest and the sea." Even Shakespeare, who could sing—

"I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,  
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows;  
Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,  
With sweet musk roses, and with eglantine,"

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

nowhere displays any longing for such an experience as that of Shelley, who wrote:—"I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea and the solitude of forests; danger which sports upon the brink of precipices has been my playmate; I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc." In fact before the advent of Thomson and Rousseau mountains were regarded with terror or, as a French writer early in the eighteenth century described them, as "great excrescences of the earth which to outward appearance indeed have neither use nor comeliness." It used to be an argument of the Atheists that the world could not have been made from a benevolent design; for had it been, no such hideous obstructions as mountain ranges would have been allowed to disfigure this planet and to obstruct men's movement upon it. To this argument some of the theologians used to reply that mountains were thrown up at the time of the fall of Adam, and hence were a deservedly inconvenient result of original sin. Others pointed out that although mountains were undoubtedly ugly and terrible, yet they served a useful purpose in feeding sheep, which a merciful Providence had created to supply us with warm clothing in the winter. Sir Leslie Stephen, in his delightful book, *The Playground of Europe*, remarks that Chateaubriand had the "audacity to assert categorically and unequivocally that the Alps were ugly," and that his true motive for the expression of this opinion was his dislike of the



## Book of Nature

supposed principles of Rousseau, whom Sir Leslie Stephen considers to be the first to discover that mountains were beautiful. He was, however, anticipated by Thomson, who, though he had never seen the Alps, yet had mused amongst his native Scottish ranges and seen

“Caledonia, in romantic view:  
Her airy mountains, from the waving main,  
Invested with a keen diffusive sky,  
Breathing the soul acute; her forests huge,  
Incult, robust, and tall, by Nature's hand  
Planted of old; her azure lakes between,  
Pour'd out extensive, and of watery wealth  
Full; winding deep and green, her fertile vales.”

It must be admitted, however, that Thomson caught his inspiration chiefly from cultivated scenery; but that he heralded a new springtide in English literature, and fostered the growth of the *Thomson's* modern spirit of Nature-worship, can hardly “*Seasons*” be doubted. All through the eighteenth century the *Seasons* was immensely popular, and that it greatly influenced Constable we know. There is also reason to believe that Gainsborough had read the *Seasons*, although he was not much of a reading man. “The book of Nature,” he said, was enough for him. Yet it is highly probable that his mother, who was a woman of culture and an amateur flower-painter, was familiar with the book, and read it to her children. The first part of it, “Winter,” was published

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

in 1726, the year before the birth of the painter. His well-known picture in the National Gallery in London, "Musidora Bathing her Feet," was suggested by a passage in the *Seasons*:—

"Thrice happy swain!  
A lucky chance, that oft decides the fate  
Of mighty monarchs, then decided thine.  
For lo! conducted by the laughing loves,  
This cool retreat his Musidora sought.  
Warm in her cheek the sultry season glow'd;  
And, robed in loose array, she came to bathe  
Her fervent limbs in the refreshing stream."

Gainsborough caught the new impulse and did for British art what Thomson did for British poetry—founded a landscape school.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE GAINSBOROUGH FAMILY.

Gainsborough's birth—The house of the Gainsboroughs—The family—Robert Gainsborough—John Gainsborough—The painter's mother—Tom at school—Early signs of talent—"Tom Pear-tree"—Governor Thicknesse—Tom's brothers and sisters—"Scheming Jack"—Humphrey—The sisters—Religious tenets.

THE exact date of the birth of Thomas Gainsborough is not known, but he was christened at the old Meeting House, Sudbury, Suffolk, on May 14th, 1727, the year of George the Second's accession. His baptismal register is preserved in the vestry of the Congregational church in Friars Street, which is an enlargement of the original Meeting House. The house where he was born is still standing, but it has been sadly altered since his day. Sir Walter Armstrong states in his *Gainsborough* that the house can no longer be recognised, but Sir Walter is mistaken. It is situated in Gainsborough Street, which was known originally as Sepulchre Street, and it bears a Gainsborough memorial tablet. The front of the house has been modernised, and has nothing in common with the picturesque old dwelling which the artist loved as the home of his

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

childhood. The will of the painter's father, who is described as a wool-stapler, has been preserved, as have also the title-deeds, and they show conclusively that John Gainsborough, the father of the artist, was the owner of the freehold of this house, and carried on his business there. In 1825 an Act of Parliament expressly provided for the "improvement" of Sudbury by making all the houses which should thereafter be built conform to the upright to the pavement in the main streets; and though several of the older houses in Sudbury still remain with their gables and overhanging upper storeys, Gainsborough's home has been less fortunate.

The roof, however, which protected the large Gainsborough family has never been demolished, and the back of the house and its interior remain much as they were in the artist's day. The *The House of the Gainsboroughs* house has had a varied history. It was originally an inn with the sign of the "Black Horse," and possibly may have been associated with the chequered fortunes of the Civil War. Cavaliers and Roundheads found recruiting-ground in the whole of East Anglia; and many a trooper in the days of Naseby and Marston Moor must have drawn rein in the little borough by the quiet Stour.

The Gainsborough family seems to have been of some standing in Sudbury; and though there is little in its records to lead to the assumption that a genius for art might have been hereditary, still several of



## Chief Constable

its members were remarkable men and women. Though John Gainsborough was engaged in trade, he appears to have carried the suggestion of distinguished associations; and it is interesting to record that he was the son

*The  
Family*

of a high official in Sudbury, Robert Gainsborough, whom we have already met as Chief Constable of the borough, a person of marked individuality. To this local dignitary we seem to trace the source of certain interesting factors in the artist's environment.

Robert Gainsborough—or Gainsbrow, as the name is spelt in the Sudbury Corporation records—was in office during the period of religious persecution which followed the discovery of King Charles II. that “Presbyterianism is not a fit religion for a gentleman;” but there

*Robert  
Gains-  
borough*

is reason to suppose that the Chief Constable by no means shared this Royal disdain. Though, owing to his position, he must have taken the Sacrament with the oaths prescribed by the Established Church, there is no evidence of his willingness to set the law at work to suppress religious “illegalities.” In 1681 and 1682, when a presentment was made by the Grand Jury at Quarter Sessions against the Dissenting minister and some of his congregation, nothing seems to have come of it, and though it may be too much to suggest that the Head Constable of Sudbury had anything directly to do with the fiasco, there is evidence enough that official sympathy with the Independents of the borough was not unknown at the time. Some such sympathy

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

on the part of Robert Gainsborough is presumably the source of that religious faith in which his distinguished grandson Thomas, the artist, was brought up.

The Chief Constable had three sons—Robert, Thomas, and John. It was the youngest of these, John, born in 1685, who became the artist's father.

*John  
Gains-  
borough*

He seems to have been an excellent man, possessed of character and capacity. His calling is variously described; but all accounts agree that it had to do with the wool trade. His energy and originality are attested by the fact that he introduced into Sudbury the trade in woollen shrouds which, until then, had been a monopoly of Coventry. With this commercial activity he combined a lofty integrity and an extreme kindliness of heart, but for which, it is probable, he might have reaped a fortune. To his honour be it recorded that he refused to accept the iniquitous "toll," amounting to about one-third of the earnings of the textile workers concerned, which was then generally levied by tradesmen in his line of business. Withal, he was so unwilling to press creditors for money that an affluent position was no doubt lost to him in this way also; and on the whole it is no wonder that when the future artist, the youngest of his nine children, was six years old, the good kindly man was gazetted a bankrupt. Some idea of the personal appearance of this deserving parent of an illustrious son has been preserved for us. He is described as tall of figure, with hair carefully

## His Father

parted in the middle of the head, and with remarkably fine white teeth. A personal attainment, which seems peculiarly appropriate to him as the Head Constable's son, was his skill with the sword, in which he greatly excelled. It is said that he had the uncommon knack of using this weapon in either hand with equal effect, and this, combined with his uncanny business in wares for the dead, seems to have made him an object of no little dread among the simple country-folk. He had withal a sense of humour, which, on one occasion, took a decidedly grim turn. It is said that his journeys to France and Holland in the interests of his legitimate calling used sometimes to enable him to smuggle a keg or two of brandy; and late one night, in a quiet country part, an excise officer, who got ear of these tidings, lay in wait for his cart. On coming up to the spot the suspected smuggler was met with a demand by the officer for an inspection of his wares. The reply was prompter than had been anticipated. Extracting one of his woollen-shroud cloths, the tradesman quickly swathed his tall figure in it from head to foot and cut such a ghostly figure in the clear moonlight that the frightened exciseman decamped without staying even to answer the query whether he would like to make a purchase against the day when a shroud would be of use to him. The affair is, of course, no proof that the alleged illegal spoil was really contained among John Gainsborough's goods; for the worthy tradesman may just as probably have wished to terrorise the officer out of a sheer love of fun as

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

out of a fear for any secrets that he had to keep. Smuggling at all events seems somewhat inconsistent with the other facts of John Gainsborough's character.

Of the artist's mother we know even less than the little that is recorded of his father. It may well be that this silence is her most eloquent epitaph. A mother of nine children has sufficient reward for her patient, silent life of devotion, if only the destinies which she surely shapes may be blameless, though inglorious. When Mrs. Gainsborough died she had fame enough in her youngest child to be well content with her unrecorded part in life.

*The  
Painter's  
Mother*

M. Chesneau was strongly of opinion that it is from their female ancestry that artists derive sensibility, grace, and elegance—all those feminine touches which lend perennial enchantment to a work of art. "It may be taken for granted," he says, "as a general rule, that among the immediate progenitors of every true artist has been a woman—his mother or his grandmother, perhaps—especially gifted with sense, soul, and intellect—true woman." These seem to have been the characteristics of Gainsborough's mother. Mary Burroughs, as her maiden name was, came of goodly people. She had a brother, Humphrey, who was rector of St. Gregory's parish church and master of the Grammar School at Sudbury. Through him the Gainsboroughs were connected with the family of the famous Dr. Busby, for Mrs. Humphrey Burroughs was a direct descendant of the great head-master.





"The Painter's Daughters" (p. 49).



## Education

It was under "uncle Burroughs" that the future artist began his education. The school, which is of ancient date, has been rebuilt on its original site, not very far from Gainsborough's house, and thither Thomas, at the age of ten, used to trace his unwilling footsteps from day to day, often loitering, we may well imagine, by the slow winding river which flows near the road, or dwelling wistfully on the quiet nooks of landscape which had already captivated his boyish fancy. Even at that early age, Nature was his only teacher. Books had little meaning for him at any part of his life; and it is fairly credibly supposed that the tedium of school was, thanks perhaps to his uncle's indulgence, relieved by him by means of sketches and caricatures. In only one of his studies does he seem to have shown any aptitude, and that was his handwriting. He retained throughout life an exquisite penmanship, and was a great admirer of this art in others, though the occasions when he practised it were all too rare.

*Tom at  
School*

It is said that it was this gift—evidently closely allied to the use of the brush—which was the first means of discovering the lad's promise in Art. His love for the open country was often justified, no doubt, by parental leave of absence from school; but, indulgent as John Gainsborough seems to have been, he could not be won over quite so frequently as Master Tom would have liked. On one occasion when a half-holiday had been refused, the young gentleman took matters into his own hands and thought to escape the

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

consequence of truancy by cleverly forging his father's signature to the usual formula: "Please give Tom a holiday." So skilful was the counterfeit that leave of absence was granted without demur. Unfortunately for the forger, however, John Gainsborough having some occasion to communicate that day with his brother-in-law, the dominie, the trick was detected. With the dread of an honest trader at the mere thought of such practices, the frightened father exclaimed that his son would one day be hanged. Upon being shown the results of Tom's truant hours in the shape of numerous pencil sketches of different parts of the country, he is said to have changed this prophecy and to have declared instead that Tom would one day be a genius.

The evidences of the lad's talent were, indeed, by this time such as to deceive nobody. None of his earliest sketches have been preserved; but there is no doubt that they were all sufficiently remarkable to justify the father and mother in their fondest hopes. An incident which went far to confirm them in their decision that Tom should be a painter was the well-known episode of "Tom Peartree." The story relates to the orchard which is still standing at the back of the Gainsborough house; and an examination of the place reveals nothing to discredit the account of the affair which is commonly given. Some of the trees are exceedingly old, and one venerable trunk, now lopped and lifeless, is of especial note. It is the stem of a pear-tree which stands aside near

*Early  
Signs of  
Talent*

## Sketching a Thief

a fence that originally divided the orchard from a roadway.

The story goes that the artist's first attempt at portraiture was a sketch of a face looking longingly over this fence at John Gainsborough's pears. "Tom  
No doubt a raid was in contemplation; and *Peartree*"  
a most likely tree for the purpose would  
have been the one which is now represented by this particular stump. The stealthy glances of the intruder as he spied out the land for his bold attempt; his melancholy and half-frightened look as he calculated the chances of success or failure, and the probable consequences; the expression of sudden resolution as he got over the fence and advanced nervously to his booty; these, no doubt, made a facial study which the future master of portraiture could not resist. Young Gainsborough was making a sketch of some trees at the time, and from his concealed position rapidly transferred to his drawing the features of the thief. Allowing him to remain until the picture was finished, the draughtsman stepped out from his place of concealment and caused the robber to decamp rather more precipitately than he had arrived.

At the family breakfast that morning the boy produced the picture, with the result that the thief was quickly identified. On being caught and charged the man denied his guilt, but in face of the sketch which was thereupon shown him, he was forced to confess, and began forthwith to plead for mercy. Fortunately for him, good John Gainsborough was not of a nature



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

to insist on strict and literal justice, and the robber accordingly was let off from a prosecution which, according to the harsh laws of that time, would probably have meant hanging. "Tom Peartree," as he was called in the young artist's sketch of him, has suffered, instead of the ignominy of the law, the not unenviable penalty of going down to posterity with something like gratitude from all lovers of art for having first discovered to one of the earliest masters of English portraiture an innate power over the human countenance.

The lad himself does not seem to have been influenced by this revelation of talent; no immediate effort to follow up the success with more conscious aim or self-educative purpose in respect of portraiture seems to have been made by him. In after-life, however, when at the height of his fame, Gainsborough often referred to this early effort of his genius.

For our idea of Gainsborough's boyish performances with the pencil generally, we must rely upon a statement of Philip Thicknesse, Governor of Land-guard Fort, who was the artist's earliest patron. According to this account Gainsborough gave Thicknesse, during his friendship with him at Ipswich, a number of sketches of trees and rocks, with shepherds and shepherdesses, done on odd scraps of paper, called by the artist himself his "riding-school." Thicknesse seems to have thought them as good as some of Gainsborough's later work; and though this may be an exaggeration on the part of a

## “Scheming Jack”

rather effusive patron, it seems probable that a certain mystery of touch distinguished the artist's work from the very first. There is reason to suppose that Gainsborough's hand had hereditary cunning. His mother painted flowers, and the achievements of the rest of the family seem closely allied to a predisposition for the use of the pencil. The father, as we have seen, had remarkable skill in the use of his hands; while two of the artist's brothers—John and Humphrey—were clever mechanicians.

We may fitly conclude our account of this stage of the artist's life by a brief notice of the other eight children, his brothers and sisters. The career of the eldest, John, was one at *Tom's* which we can only smile, while feeling *Brothers* something like pity. Undoubtedly clever, *and Sisters* he was woefully wanting in some one practical quality which would have given aim to his energies and form to his ideas. “I never knew John to finish anything,” the artist himself once remarked, and the innumerable mechanical inventions of “Scheming Jack”—as he was called in Sudbury—remain a memorial to his ingenuity, and at the same time to his incapacity, which is almost as pathetic as it is humorous. For John Gainsborough's notions were not the mere abstractions of the Cambridge mathematician who said of his new-found solution to an all-absorbing problem, “The best of it all is, it can never possibly be of any good to anybody.” The object of all his futile striving was a practical good, and, had he

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

succeeded, his inventions would have been of great utility to everybody.

Amongst the contrivances of this eccentric genius were a wheel that turned in a still bucket of water; a cradle that rocked itself; a chronometer for correcting the longitude; and, most prophetic, if most abortive of all, a device for flying! Of his aerial experiment, an amusing description is given. An announcement of the intended flight was made to all and sundry in the town of Sudbury; and amid a marvelling crowd, the confident rival of Icarus mounted with pinions ready adjusted upon the roof of a summer-house. With a literal pluming of his feathers for a flight, he shot boldly forward into space, and the next moment found himself, to his intense mortification and the huge amusement of the spectators, being drawn, breathless and shaken, out of an adjoining ditch.

"Curse it!" used to be his comment on his repeated failures, "some little thing was wanting. Had I gone on with it, I am sure I should have succeeded."

It seems, however, new plans crowded so fast upon him, that he could seldom command patience enough to dwell long on one thing. His nearest approach to success and fame seems to have been his invention for testing the longitude. A reward for some such device had been offered by the Government; and though John Gainsborough was beaten in the competition, he seems to have come off a very good second. Government gave him a consolation prize for his

## John's Character

efforts. John, however, would never rest content; and, undaunted by failure, he is said to have resolved, when advanced in years, to take a journey to the West Indies to test the accuracy of his instrument. It is believed that he died when passing through London to embark for the voyage; thus leaving a record of human unfulfilment which moves our pity from first to last. He was the only one of Gainsborough's brothers who survived him.

Fulcher gives us the following glimpse of him, which I reproduce because it also throws a side-light on the painter's generous character. "I never saw him but once," he says, "and that is more than twenty years ago; but passing through Sudbury, where he has always resided, I visited him as a friend of his brother's; but previous to my seeing him, I had sat an hour with his wife, and I think seven daughters; it was on a Sunday morning, and I found them all clean, but clothed in the most humble manner. These females seemed all endowed with good sense, but their countenances, even the children, were overcast with distress. I had taken the opportunity to give the eldest daughter a guinea (for I knew the character of the father) before he appeared, but the mother perceiving what I had done, said: 'God certainly sent you, sir, for we have a piece of beef for dinner, but we have no bread to eat with it.' I was shocked at this information, and asked her whether Mr. Gainsborough, her brother, did not assist them. 'O yes!' said she, 'he often sends us five guineas, but the instant my husband gets it, he



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

lays it all out in brass work to discover the longitude.”

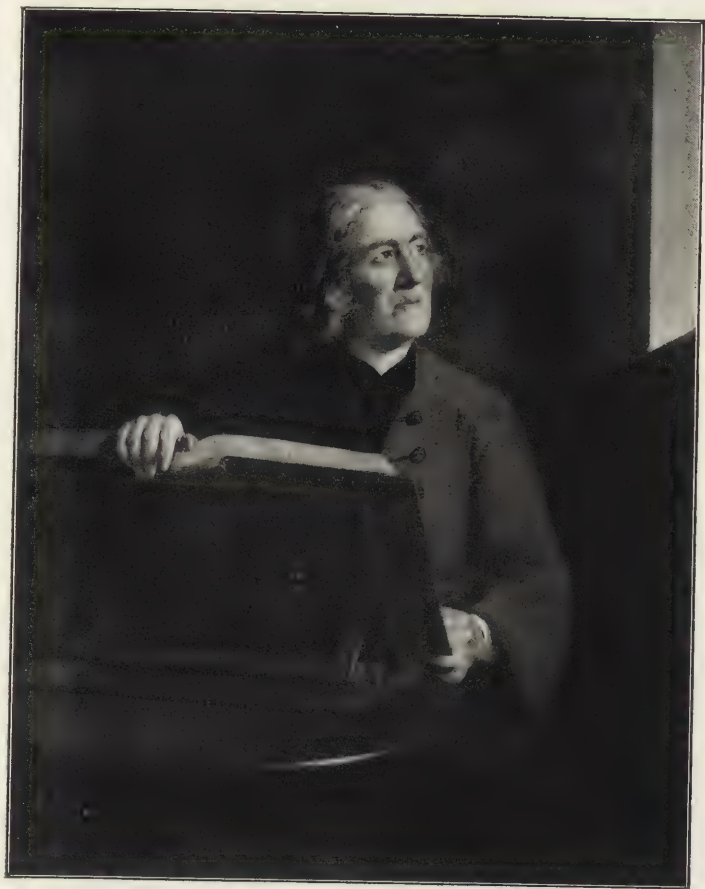
Amongst the Gainsborough memorials in the Friars Street Chapel is a tablet to John, son of “Scheming Jack,” with the following epitaph:—

“How lov’d, how valued once, avails them not,  
To whom related or by whom begot;  
A heap of dust is all we now can see,  
’Tis all they are; And all the Proud shall be.”

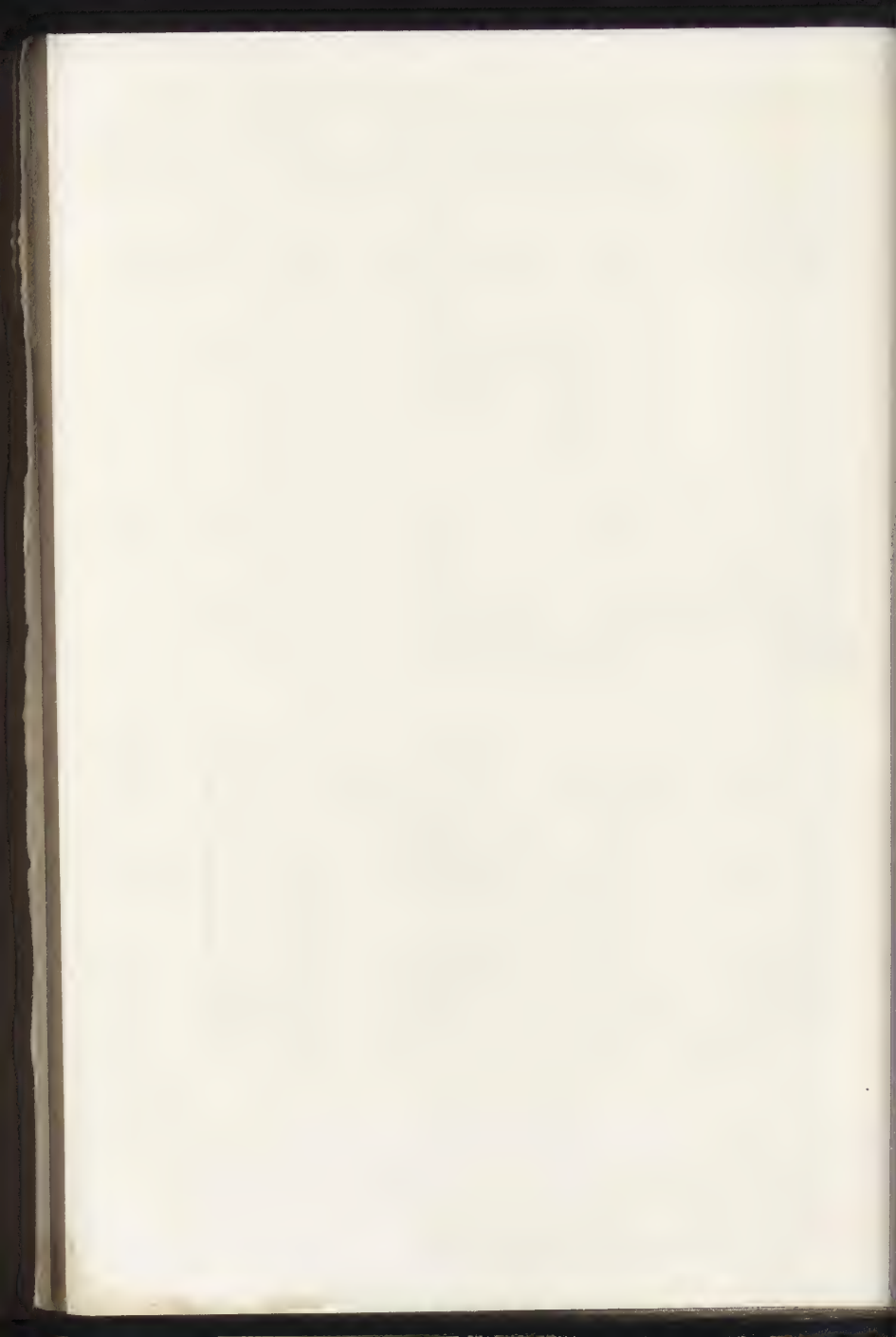
Of the painter’s other brothers—Humphrey, Matthias, and Robert—the most interesting was Humphrey. Matthias died in childhood through a terrible accident. He was running with a fork in his hand when he fell and caused one of the prongs to penetrate his brain. Robert seems scarcely to have crossed the scene of the family life at Sudbury at all. Tradition says that he eloped with his wife, and all that is known of him is that he settled somewhere in Lancashire.

Though nine years senior to Thomas, Humphrey was, through the death of Matthias, the nearest brother in age to the painter, and seems to have *Humphrey* been a favourite with him. There is a fine portrait of him by the artist, which, in treatment, is not unlike the famous picture of “The Parish Clerk.” He became a Dissenting minister, and received a charge at Henley-on-Thames, where he is said to have shown great zeal and wholeheartedness in his work. It was this circumstance which made the career of Humphrey only less





"The Parish Clerk" (p. 72).



## James Watt Anticipated

pathetic than that of his elder brother John. Both were endowed with the same genius for mechanics, but the failures of Humphrey in this direction seem to lose their bitterness in the well-directed and purposeful life of the Nonconformist preacher.

It is generally claimed for Humphrey Gainsborough that he anticipated Watt in the perfecting of the steam-engine. He is said to have conceived the idea of condensing the steam in a separate vessel. A model of this invention passed from Gainsborough, the artist, into the possession of Philip Thicknesse, his patron, who remarks, "that engine alone would have furnished a fortune to all the Gainsboroughs and their descendants had not that unsuspicious, good-hearted man let a cunning, designing artist see it, who surreptitiously carried it off in his mind's eye." Who this cunning and designing artist was, we are not told; nor does there seem any evidence that Watt, who took out the patent for the invention in 1769, was ever aware that he had been anticipated. Thicknesse, however, has been corroborated in his account of the matter by Fulcher, who, in his *Life of Thomas Gainsborough*, published in 1856, states that he had the authority of some of the Gainsborough family for the story of Humphrey's invention and extraordinary bad fortune. Amongst other devices by Humphrey Gainsborough is a sun-dial, now in the British Museum, with his name deeply cut upon it. For a tide-mill of his invention he received £50 from the Society for the Encouragement of Arts. He was also the originator of the fire-proof safe. Such

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

activities as these, however, were regarded by the Rev. Humphrey Gainsborough as "parerga" rather than as the serious occupation of his life, and he seems to have been always a popular, as well as an ardent religious preacher. His character as a Nonconformist minister is attested by the fact that he refused the offer of influential friends at Henley to secure preferment for him if he would enter the Established Church. His death at Henley in the year 1776 was painfully sudden, and wrought powerfully upon the mind of his brother, the artist. The minister had been asked out to dine one evening, and as he did not arrive within the expected time, some of the company, evidently fearing a mishap, set out to look for him. They were confirmed in their suspicions by finding him lying dead by the roadside. He was evidently on his way to the party when he succumbed, it is supposed, to heart-disease. In the chapel where he ministered at Henley a monument has been erected to his memory.

In addition to five sons, the Gainsborough family included four daughters—Mary, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Susannah. All four married, and as their husbands belonged either to Sudbury or Bath, the tie with their artist-brother's career seems curiously preserved by them. Mary, the eldest, who married a Mr. Gibbon, a Dissenting minister of Bath, was the recipient of some of the letters of which the artist, unfortunately, wrote so very few. Susannah Gainsborough became the wife of Mr. Edward Gardiner, of the same town. Their

## Gainsborough Dupont

grandson, the Rev. Edward Gardiner, possessed many of the most valuable Gainsborough heirlooms, including several portraits painted by the artist, as well as a number of etchings. He was among the owners who lent their pictures to the great loan Exhibition of Gainsboroughs at the Grosvenor Gallery in London in 1885. Sarah and Elizabeth Gainsborough both had their homes in Sudbury, Sarah marrying a Mr. Dupont, and Elizabeth a Mr. Bird. One of Sarah's sons, Gainsborough Dupont, would have been worthy of some note, even apart from his family relationships, for not only was he the pupil of his illustrious uncle in art, but he was well on the road to an independent reputation when he was cut off at the early age of thirty. He worked with his uncle both at Bath and in London, and sat to him for his portrait. A painting in the Council Hall of Trinity House—a portrait group of the Elder Brethren—is a good example of Gainsborough Dupont's work.

A curious circumstance that is worthy of notice in the meagre history of the Gainsborough family, is the contradiction which seems to exist in regard to their religious tenets. With the exception of one boy and one girl, all the children of John and Mary Gainsborough, including Thomas, are mentioned in the register of the old Independent Meeting House at Sudbury as having been baptised there, the missing names being Robert and Susannah. Whether these two were baptised elsewhere or by any other rite than that of the chapel does not appear, and

*Religious  
Tenets*



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

the break in the religious record of the family might appear at first to be fraught with some especial meaning when it is remembered that the father and mother have separate burial-places in Sudbury. A tombstone to John Gainsborough near the south porch of St. Gregory's Church can just be deciphered, and the record of his burial there is preserved at St. Peter's Church. Mary Gainsborough lies buried beside several of the family, in what was once part of the chapel graveyard, but the old Meeting House having been extended, her resting-place has been included within the building. It is certainly strange that the parents who had some of their children baptised at chapel and others apparently not so baptised, should themselves have been laid in grounds which are consecrated to different forms of religious belief. Probably, however, the explanation is to be sought in nothing more profound than the exigencies of the time. The difference between the Established Church and Nonconformity may well have been regarded as political rather than religious. Indeed, it is recorded of Sudbury that incumbents of the Established Church more than once ministered to members of the Meeting House community. Since it is known that there was not always a regular succession of Dissenting ministers at Sudbury, the unavoidable absence of the chapel rites may have been the reason for the acceptance of the offices of the Church.

## CHAPTER III.

### EARLY CAREER.

The son's bent—A wise father—Tom in London—Gravelot—Francis Hayman—Catastrophe averted—Gin drinking—On his own account—Returns home—Marriage—Margaret Burr—Settles in Ipswich—Meets Joshua Kirby—Buyers come—Governor Thicknesse—Ipswich—Constable's letter—Pupils—Tiffs—Two daughters—Mary's marriage—Impressions of the painter—Portrait of Wolfe—"Landguard Fort"—The musical party.

JOHN GAINSBOROUGH, shroud and crape merchant, of Sepulchre Street, Sudbury, having fully made up his mind that his son, notwithstanding the gruenessomeness of his domestic surroundings, was destined to become a genius who would open up new vistas in the realms of Beauty, set to work to find the means by which this expectation could be realised. The world therefore owes a heavy debt of gratitude to this good tradesman and his wife, who seems to have shared her husband's hopes of the boy's future. Many a promising lad, born with the artistic temperament, has been thwarted by parental folly in his efforts to give the world assurance of his high calling. Shelley's father "was everything which the poet's father ought not to have been." Byron's father was a black-

*The Son's  
Bent*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

guard, and his mother a fool whom the poet learned to hate. The lives of Schumann and Balzac were made miserable through the determination of their parents to make them study for the law; and it was not until Millet's father was told by Mouchel that he would be eternally damned if he did not allow his son to follow the bent of his genius, that poor François was allowed to abandon the plough and devote himself to art. It was poverty, however, rather than disinclination to send François to an art school which tempted the old peasant to keep Millet at farm work until he was eighteen years old.

Fortunately, John Gainsborough had recovered from the troubles of his bankruptcy by the time that Tom had completed his school age. That his business was now fairly prosperous may be assumed from the fact that he kept travellers. Still, with his large family and his good-natured way of dealing with debtors, the cost of apprenticing the lad with some artist of repute in London must have been a matter for serious consideration. This, no doubt, was the subject of discussion at the family council which was held before John Gainsborough at length decided to send his son, then in his fifteenth year, to study art in the Academy in St. Martin's Lane, Westminster. In high spirits, though doubtless not without a pang at the final leave-taking (for he was fond of his home), Tom mounted the coach for London one fine morning in 1742. During the first part of his three years' stay in the metropolis he lived

## Grounded in Art

with a silversmith whose name is forgotten, but who introduced him to the French artist and engraver, Gravelot, who taught him the technicalities of his profession, and exercised considerable influence over his style.

Sir Walter Armstrong is of opinion that Gainsborough at this period of his life could have met no artist in London whose work appealed to him more sympathetically than that of the Frenchman. "The figure-drawing of both belonged decisively to the same family. Not only are they similar in method, they betray a search of the same characteristics in the movements of men and women, they show the same delicacy of apprehension, the same love of all that is civilised and distinguished in manner. Gainsborough was a freer draughtsman, and Gravelot the more precise, and in some cases there is little else to suggest a difference of hand." Gravelot was the illustrator of Theobald's *Shakespeare*, published in 1740. He was a friend of Garrick's, whom he probably introduced to Gainsborough, thus initiating the firm friendship which afterwards existed between the great actor and the great painter. The St. Martin's Lane Academy, where Gainsborough studied, was at the time of his matriculation there, under the direction of Francis Hayman, who understood the technicalities of the painter's art, and was a good craftsman, but lacked imagination and insight, though he enjoyed considerable reputation as a painter of

*Tom in  
London*

*Gravelot*

*Francis  
Hayman*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

historical subjects and of portraits. Hayman, like Sir Joshua Reynolds, was a Devonshire worthy, and his master was that Robert Brown of whom the story is told that he rescued Sir James Thornhill from a terrible death. When Sir James was painting the dome of St. Paul's, he stepped back to the very edge of the scaffolding to gaze at his handiwork, quite unconscious of the fact that had he taken one more step backward he would have been hurled into eternity. Brown, who

*Cata-  
strophe  
averted*

was assisting him, saw his peril. To warn him would only make him turn round to meet his fate. Brown therefore dashed his brush over the master's work. Thornhill rushed forward, saying "What have you done?" "Only saved your life," Brown replied.

It was probably during his tutelage under Hayman that Gainsborough conceived that affection for actors and musicians which he fostered more and more as he grew older. Hayman was well known in theatrical circles. He started in London as scene-painter to Fleetwood, of Drury Lane Theatre, and when his employer died, Hayman married the widow. It is said, however, that he did not set a good example to his pupils by his conduct. It is alleged that he was a victim to the dissipation characteristic of the age in which a

*Gin  
Drinking*

new impetus had been given to drunkenness by the introduction of gin at the "Glorious Revolution." John Richard Green tells us in his *History of the English People* that the London gin-shops in the earlier part of the





"The Blue Boy" (p. 85).



## Studio in Hatton Garden

eighteenth century contained announcements that they could fill their customers drunk for a penny or dead drunk for twopence. Hayman may not have been more dissipated than the average men of the time. Drunkenness and foul talk were, unfortunately, fashionable vices of the earlier half of the eighteenth century, and it was thought no disgrace even to the Prime Minister (Walpole) that he cultivated both. The dissipation which the youth from Suffolk saw around him during his student-days in London must have contrasted sadly in the young artist's mind with the purity of the home-life at Sudbury, whither his thoughts often wandered. No wonder that he should have become home-sick at times, but it was his home-sickness that kept him from going wrong. The worst that happened to him seems to have been that he learned to swear. In after-years his correspondence was frequently emphasised by very "cursory remarks."

After working a year in Hayman's Academy, Gainsborough in 1745 took a studio in Hatton Garden and started on his own account as a portrait and landscape painter, and, it is said, as modeller for Italian image-makers. Patrons, however, were not numerous, and nobody seems to have appreciated at its right value the genius of the struggling young artist, whose pictures were in the future destined to fetch thousands of pounds at auction. Supplies from home probably now failed him, and thinking, no doubt, that

*On his  
own  
Account*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

he could get as many sitters at Sudbury as at Hatton Garden, and knowing that he could live much cheaper in the country than in town, he decided to return to his native borough, where he arrived a few months after the Hatton Garden experiment.

Shortly after his home-coming the young man's fancy "lightly turned to thoughts of love." As he was sketching one day in a sylvan retreat hard by the Stour, a vision of womanly loveliness in the person of Margaret Burr swam into his ken and added enchantment to the scene. He put the lady into his picture and his heart.

There was a mystery about the parentage of Miss Burr, but she had two hundred a year in her own right, a consideration which may have prevented any objection from being raised by Gainsborough's parents to Tom's engagement, though he was then not quite nineteen years old and the lady was some two years younger. She accepted him, and they were married a year later—that is to say, in 1746. Margaret Burr was the sister of one of John Gainsborough's travellers, but rumour fathered her upon one of the exiled Stuart princes.

*Margaret Burr* "You know, my dear, I am the daughter of a prince," she was heard to remark on one occasion, but this and her good looks seem to be all the evidence in favour of her royal parentage. I think that Sir Walter Armstrong is not justified in hinting that she was an illegitimate daughter of the

## An "Original" Letter

Duke of Bedford, because her husband addressed his Grace rather familiarly in the following letter, appealing to him on behalf of a friend:—

"MY LORD DUKE,—A most noteworthy honest man, and one of the greatest geniuses for musical composition England ever produced, is now in London, and has got two or three Members of Parliament along with him out of Devonshire, to make application for one of the receivers of the land tax of that county, now resigned by a very old man, one Mr. Haddy. His name is William Jackson, lives at Exeter, and for plainness, truth, and ingenuity at the same time, is beloved as no man ever was. Your Grace has doubtless heard his compositions; but he is no fiddler, your Grace may take my word for it; he is extremely clever and good; he is a married man with a young family, and is qualified over and over for the place; has got friends of fortune, who will be bound for him in any sum, and they are all making applications to his Grace the Duke of Grafton to get him this place. But, my Lord Duke, I told him they could not do it without me; that I must write a letter to your Grace about it. He is at Mr. Arnold's, in Norfolk Street, in the Strand; and if your Grace would be pleased to think of it, I should be ever bound to pray for your Grace. Your Grace knows that I am an *original*, and therefore, I hope, will be the more ready to pardon this monstrous freedom from

"Your Grace's, etc.,

"THO. GAINSBOROUGH."



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

The letter is in the easy, natural style characteristic of Gainsborough's correspondence, but there is nothing in it to warrant Sir Walter's assumption.

Shortly after their marriage Gainsborough and his beautiful bride removed to Ipswich, where they took a small house at a rental of £6 a year. It was some time before the young painter received any commissions, but his wife's annuity of £200 was quite enough in those days for the young couple to live upon, and the artist's mind was therefore free from anxiety about the means of earning a livelihood. A chance meeting, however, with Joshua Kirby, who became first President of the Artists' Society, which preceded the foundation of the Royal Academy, was a happy turning-point in the young painter's career. One day, says Fulcher, as Gainsborough was sketching near Freston Tower, on the banks of the

*Meets* Orwell, "a stranger who was passing paused to watch the progress of his pencil, and after  
*Joshua* looking on in silence for a few minutes  
*Kirby* introduced himself to Gainsborough as 'Joshua Kirby.' A warm friendship, strengthened by kindred pursuits, commenced between them. Many a long day's ramble they took together; many a sketch was made of the quaint old house in the Butter Market, Ipswich; and many a winter evening did they spend in each other's company, discoursing on the art they loved, while the future Mrs. Trimmer, perchance, sat drawing by their side."

Through Kirby's influence Gainsborough's merits

## Thicknesse's Foresight

both as a landscape and a portrait painter gradually became recognised by some of the wealthier people in Ipswich and its neighbourhood, and his pictures now began to find buyers. Gainsborough, consciously or unconsciously, adopted a novel way of advertising his profession; at any rate it was a successful one. He put the replica of "Tom Peartree" against his garden wall, so that the head could be seen just above it by passers-by on the other side. One day in 1753 it attracted the attention of Philip Thicknesse, the Lieutenant-Governor of Landguard Fort at the mouth of the Orwell, of whom mention has already been made. The Governor, it is said, mistook the picture for a living man; but when he discovered his mistake he resolved to give a commission for his own portrait to the painter. Thicknesse became enchanted both with Gainsborough and his work, and must have the credit of having foreseen the greatness to which Gainsborough would attain in the world of Art, and of having advised and helped him on the way by which he achieved it.

Ipswich in Gainsborough's time probably much resembled the town which, at a later date, received the honour of a visit from Mr. Pickwick, who had his interesting escapade there. It still dreamed of the Middle Ages and had not become demoralised, from the artist's point of view, by the invasion of the steamship and the railway. No gasometers loomed on its horizon, no factory chimney

*Buyers  
Come*

*Governor  
Thicknesse*

*Ipswich*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

cast its gaunt shadow over its picturesque streets of gabled dwellings which the sunlight entered through diamond-paned windows. The arrival and departure of the mail-coaches were the most exciting events in the story of its life from day to day, but further variety was given to its means of communication with the outer world by the yawls and luggers and sea-going craft that the tides of the Orwell bore to its wharves and quays. Along the banks of that river, still one of the most picturesque of English waterways, Gainsborough loved to wander. His favourite haunt, however, was the winding grove of springy turf and overhanging oaks and elms to which the Gippings, in honour of the great painter's memory, long since gave the name of "Gainsborough's Lane."

Of Gainsborough's life at Ipswich not much is known. Shortly after his settlement there he was sent for by the owner of a "stately home" in the neighbourhood, who imagined that the young artist was a house-painter, and asked him to undertake a commission to *Constable's* decorate the mansion. The commission, it *Letter* is needless to say, was promptly declined. The following letter from Constable lifts the curtain a little from the interior of the Gainsborough home:—

"EAST BERGHOLT, 7th May 1797.

"DEAR FRIEND SMITH,—If you remember, in my last I promised to write again soon and tell you what I could about Gainsborough. I hope you will not think me negligent when I inform you that I have not been

## Life at Ipswich

able to learn anything of consequence respecting him. I can assure you it is not for the want of asking that I have not been successful, for indeed I have talked with those who knew him. I believe in Ipswich they did not know his value till they lost him. He belonged to something of a musical club in that town, and painted some of their portraits in a picture of a choir; it is said to be very curious. I heard it was in Colchester; I shall endeavour to see it before I come to town, which will be soon. He was generally the butt of the company, and his wig was to them a fund of amusement, as it was often snatched from his head and thrown about the room, etc.; but enough of this. I shall now give you a few lines, *verbatim*, which my friend Dr. Hamilton, of Ipswich, was so good as to send me. Though it amounts to nothing, I am obliged to him for taking the commission:—‘I have not been neglectful of the inquiries respecting Gainsborough, but have learned nothing worth your notice. There is no vale or grove distinguished by his name in this neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup> There is a place up the river-side where he often sat to sketch, on account of the beauty of the landscape—its extensiveness and richness in variety, both in the fore and back grounds. It comprehended Bramford and other distant villages on one side, and on the other side of the river extended towards Nacton, etc. Freston alehouse must have been near, for it seems he has

<sup>1</sup> The name “Gainsborough’s Lane” must have been given to the painter’s favourite walk at a later date.



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

introduced the 'Boot' sign-post in many of his best pictures. Smart and Frost (two drawing-masters in Ipswich) often go there now to take views; whether they be inspired from pressing the same sod with any of this great painter's genius, you are a better judge than I am. Farewell.'

"This, my dear friend, is the little all I have yet gained; but though I have been unsuccessful, it does not follow that I should relinquish my inquiries. If you want to know the exact time of his birth, I will take a ride over to Sudbury and look into the register. There is an exceeding fine picture of his painting at Mr. Kilderby's, in Ipswich.

"Thine sincerely,

"JOHN CONSTABLE."

That Gainsborough had at least two pupils at Ipswich, one of whom was a son of his friend Kirby, we know from the following extract  
*Pupils* from a letter which that fond parent wrote to the boy to urge upon him the importance of attending to his religious duties:—"My letter may serve as Sunday meditation, and let no one see it except Master W., the companion of your studies."

Gainsborough's marriage was a happy one, notwithstanding that he possessed some of the  
*Tiffs* eccentricities of genius and was not always in the best of tempers. Fulcher has preserved for us a pretty story, illustrating the way in





"Woody Landscape: Sunset" (p. 89).



## “Fox” and “Tristram”

which the young artist and his wife settled their occasional family quarrels :

“Whenever he spoke crossly to his wife, a remarkably sweet-tempered woman, he would write a note of repentance, sign it with the name of his favourite dog, ‘Fox,’ and address it to his Margaret’s pet spaniel, ‘Tristram.’ Fox would take the note in his mouth and duly deliver it to Tristram. Margaret would then answer—‘My own dear Fox, you are always loving and good, and I am a naughty little female ever to worry you as I too often do, so we will kiss and say no more about it.—Your own affectionate  
‘TRIS.’”

Two daughters were born to Gainsborough at Ipswich, Mary and Margaret, the subjects of the well-known picture of two girls chasing a butterfly. It is in the National Gallery *Two Daughters* in London. Margaret Gainsborough never married, but Mary became the wife of Dr. Johann Christian Fischer, the famous hautboy player, whose acquaintance Gainsborough made at Bath, and whose portrait (now in the Hampton Court Gallery) he painted. Both Gainsborough and his wife, though they always welcomed Fischer to their musical circles, were saddened when they discovered that their daughter had lost her heart to him. They were right in their anticipation that the marriage would be an unhappy one. A pathetic letter which he wrote to his sister, Mrs. Gibbon, after the wedding reveals

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

to us the depth of feeling and the kindly tolerance of which Gainsborough was capable :—

“The notice I had of it” (the engagement), he says, “was very sudden, as I had not the least suspicion of the attachment being so long and deeply seated; and as it was too late for me to alter anything without being the cause of total unhappiness on both sides, my *consent*, which was a mere compliment to affect to ask, I needs must give; whether such a match was agreeable to me or not, I would not have the cause of unhappiness lie upon my conscience; and accordingly they were married last Monday, and are settled for the present in a ready-furnished little house in Curzon Street, Mayfair. I can’t say I have any reason to doubt the man’s honesty or goodness of heart, as I never heard any one speak anything amiss of him; and as to his oddities and temper, she must learn to like them as she likes his person, for nothing can be altered now. . . . Peggy has been very unhappy about it, but I endeavour to comfort her.”

Amongst the friends whom Gainsborough made at Ipswich was the Rev. James Hingeston, Vicar of Raydon, near Southwold; and Mr. Robert Edgar, of Colchester. In the following letter to a friend Mr. Hingeston’s son gives an interesting account of the impression which Gainsborough made at the Vicarage :—

“I remember Gainsborough well, he was a great favourite of my father; indeed, his affable and agree-

## Witness to Character

able manners endeared him to all with whom his profession brought him in contact, either at the cottage or the castle; there was that peculiar bearing which could not fail to leave a pleasing impression. Many houses in Suffolk, as well as in the neighbouring county, were always open to him, and their owners thought it an honour to entertain him. I have seen the aged features of the peasantry lit up with a grateful recollection of his many acts of kindness and benevolence. My father's residence bears testimony alike to his skill as a painter and his kindness as a man, for the panels of several of the rooms are adorned with the production of his genius. In one is a picture of Gainsborough's two daughters when young; they are engaged in chasing a butterfly. The arrangement of the figures and the landscape introduced into the background are of the most charming description. There are several other drawings, all in good preservation, and delineated in his happiest manner."

Amongst the pictures which Gainsborough painted at Ipswich is the portrait of a young military officer, believed to be Lieutenant, afterwards General, Wolfe, the hero of Quebec. Some doubt *Portrait of* has been raised as to whether Wolfe ever *Wolfe* sat to Gainsborough, but there seems to be no good reason for this doubt. Wolfe became an ensign at sixteen years of age, and fought at Dettingen, Fontenoy, and Laufeldt, and greatly distinguished himself at the capture of Louisburg. These battles were all fought



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

during Gainsborough's residence at Ipswich. On his way to and from the Continent, Wolfe must have called at Harwich, which was then the Portsmouth of the Eastern Coast, and therefore he must have made the acquaintance of the Lieutenant-Governor of Landguard Fort, and there is nothing more likely than that Thicknesse should have induced the rising young officer to sit for his portrait to the rising young artist. There is nothing, however, in the Gainsborough picture to suggest the awkward manner and occasional gasconade which, we are told, characterised Wolfe, though much to indicate the genius and intrepidity which Pitt discovered in him. By the way, the charge against Wolfe that he was occasionally given to gasconade was hardly consistent with his memorable utterance after repeating some famous stanza of Gray's "Elegy" as he rode across the St. Lawrence on the eve of Quebec. The picture reminds us of that utterance, and not of any gasconade. That is all the more reason for believing in its genuineness.

Besides his many sketches and landscapes, Gainsborough painted his first sea view at Ipswich. This was a picture of Landguard Fort, and was a commission from Thicknesse, who gives the following account of the transaction:—

*"Land-  
guard  
Fort"*

"Soon after my introduction to Mr. Gainsborough the late king passed by the garrisons under my command, and as I wanted a subject to employ Mr. Gainsborough's pencil in the landscape way, I desired him to come and eat a dinner with me,

## “Landguard Fort”

and to take down in his pocket-book the particulars of the Fort, the adjacent hills, and the distant view of Harwich, in order to form a landscape of the yachts passing the garrison under the salute of the guns, of the size of a panel over my chimney-piece; he accordingly came, and in a short time after brought the picture. I was much pleased with the performance, and asking him the price, he modestly said he hoped I would not think fifteen guineas too much. I assured him that in my opinion it would (if offered to be sold in London) produce double that sum, and accordingly paid him, thanked him, and lent him an excellent fiddle; for I found that he had as much taste for music as he had for painting, though he had then never touched a musical instrument, for at that time he seemed to envy even my poor talents as a fiddler; but before I got my fiddle home again he had made such a proficiency in music that I would as soon have painted against him as to have attempted to fiddle against him. I believe, however, it was what I had said about the landscape, and Thomas Peartree's head, which first induced Mr. Gainsborough to suspect (for he only suspected it) that he had something more in him which might be fetched out; he found he could fetch a good tone out of my fiddle, and why not out of his own palette? The following winter I went to London, and I suspected—for, like Mr. Gainsborough, I only suspected—that my landscape had uncommon merit. I therefore took it with me, and as Mr. Major, the engraver, was then just returned from Paris, and esteemed the first artist in London in

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

his way, I showed it to him. He admired it so much that I urged him, for both their sakes as well as mine, to engrave a plate from it, which he seemed very willing to undertake, but doubted whether it would by its sale (as it was only a perspective view of the Fort) answer the expense; to obviate which I offered to take ten guineas' worth of impressions myself; he then instantly agreed to it. The impression will show the merit of both artists; but alas! the picture being left against a wall which had been made with salt-water mortar, is perished and gone. That engraving made Mr. Gainsborough known beyond the circle of his country residence."

The picture of the musical party referred to by Constable in his letter to Mr. Smith was a sketch painted from memory, and included portraits of Wood playing the fiddle, accompanied by Mills on the 'cello, Gibbs, another musician, who however is half asleep, Captain Clarke, and Gainsborough himself. Fulcher says that when Gainsborough was leaving Ipswich his friends paid a last visit to his studio, and begged him to let them have a souvenir of the pleasant time they had had together. Gainsborough promptly granted the request, and seems to have given them leave to help themselves, for "one took one sketch, another another, and finally that I have been describing ('The Concert') came into my father's hands."

We may fitly take leave of Gainsborough at Ipswich by quoting a few lines from a poem addressed to

## Quaker Poet's Tribute

him by Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet of Wood-  
bridge:

"Painter, farewell! 'mid scenes that nurst  
Thy genius, where thy youthful eye  
First studied nature, and where first  
Thy hand aspired its skill to try—  
Fain would a Suffolk poet vie  
In praise of merit like thine own."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BATH PERIOD.

Bath—The psychological moment—Portraits paid best—The benefit of Bath—A scanty chronicle—In it, but not of it—The days of the Dandies—The “human face divine”—Mediævalists and moderns—Beau Nash—Frivolity sublimed—Friends in Bath—Gainsborough’s eccentricities—Giardini—Abel—Fischer—As Harper—Crosdill—The German’s lute—Dutch influence—His portraits—Early Bath portraits—“The Parish Clerk”—Middle Bath portraits—Portraits of Garrick—A Shot at Shakespeare—Miss Linley—Sheridan’s marriage—Uncongenial sitters—An eye for faces—Pleasant pictures—Gainsborough’s children—Emotional charm—“The Cottage Door”—The rural poor—“The Shepherd Boy”—His infinite variety—“The Blue Boy.”

IN the middle of the eighteenth century, as all the world knows through the writings of Fielding and Smollett, Bath was at the height of its glory as the chief rendezvous in England of the fashionable, the gouty, and the wealthy classes. Thicknesse believed that if Gainsborough once settled there he would soon find himself on the high road to fame and fortune. Mrs. Gainsborough, whom Thicknesse for some reason disliked, seems not to have shared his confidence about her husband’s future, for when, no doubt also on the advice of Thicknesse, Gainsborough decided to take a house in the newly-





"The Market Cart" (p. 93).



## Turning-point

built Circus at a rental of fifty pounds a year, his wife became greatly alarmed, and wondered where the income was to come from to maintain the household. Her alarm was allayed, however, on Thicknesse undertaking to assist with the rent if his help were needed, and in 1760, the year of the accession of George III., Gainsborough bade farewell to Ipswich, after fourteen years' residence there, and settled in the West of England metropolis.

Whatever may be the merits of Philip Thicknesse's claim that it was he who was responsible for dragging Gainsborough from the obscurity of a country town, there can be no doubt that this introduction, in the heyday of life, into the gay and brilliantly coloured world of rank and fashion was a turning-point in the painter's career. The change which came over his art is so marked as to be appreciable even to the uncritical, and it distinguishes one of the three great phases in the development of his genius, which correspond to his migrations to Ipswich, Bath, and London. The "Bath period" is, in many ways, the most distinguishable of the three.

The characteristic of his career during these fifteen years is his preference for portraiture. His earliest ambition was to be a painter of landscape, and his own homeland scenery, which was his earliest love, still twined its memories with affectionate constancy into his latest productions. Love and necessity are, however, contending forces

*The  
Psycho-  
logical  
Moment*

*Portraits  
Paid Best*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

with the rare spirits of the world, and Gainsborough's stay in Ipswich, even as he loitered and painted by the sweet waters of the Orwell, had already disillusioned him of any dream he may have had of an absorbing devotion to landscape as a means of living. He had found that portraits paid better, and he was to find that still more during his residence at Bath.

Not that Bath, or any other influence, could warp or distract the pure aim of Gainsborough; although  
*The* it provided him with the opportunity for  
*Benefit of* gradually raising his prices. What Bath  
*Bath* did for him, so far from tempting him by  
any lower motive than that of devotion to  
Art, was in reality to reveal to him, under another  
aspect of the world—and of Art itself—another  
motive for his genius, wherewith he was able to win  
other secrets of life. At Bath he became acquainted  
with some of the oldest aristocratic families—"part-  
ridge-breeders of a thousand years"—and in the  
houses of a few of them in Wessex he saw their  
prouder ancestors immortalised by Van Dyck. Thus  
he was doubly influenced. To an instinctive sympathy  
for the Fleming there was no question but he would  
yield himself; to the attraction of pomp and cere-  
monial, little enough as he liked them, he must concede  
something as an artist, since it afforded him the oppor-  
tunity for which this hero-worship might else have left  
him to seek in vain. Where indeed but at Bath  
should he turn portrait-painter? There was all that  
could give grace to life. Thither flocked the beauties,

## Life in Bath

wits, and gallants. Even among the freaks of fashion and the pranks of folly, the faces of men and women seemed to speak of refinement and of civilisation. Amid the natural beauty of the place, and the cultured ease of its society, the human countenance was seen to highest cultivated perfection. In the City of the Waters of the Sun life seemed like a stream that sprang deeply from its sources and flowed strongly and brightly, if swiftly, by.

Hither, then, came one of the greatest colourists that ever painted portraits. Is it significant of Gainsborough, the artist, that his life in Bath is so barely chronicled? We hear little of him, in his early years there, beyond his companionship for his musical cronies. That he cared little for social circumstance is well known, and the fact, therefore, that so little is heard of him in Bath, though his genius was then recognised there, may perhaps suggest that Gainsborough's interest in the society amidst which he lived was wholly that of the artist. He only wanted sitters; he does not seem to have courted their society. How little he knew of the private lives of his subjects; how equally little—perhaps how much less—they knew of or cared for him! In this he differs widely from Reynolds. The President's deafness did not prevent him from hearing, by means of his ear-trumpet; and any talk about persons that came anywhere near that capacious instrument was duly received and transmitted by it. If there be significance in this, in view of Sir Joshua's minuter

*A Scanty  
Chronicle*



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

expression of character in faces, may it not be true of Gainsborough that his less clear presentment of all the lights and shades of individual temperament, implies less devotion to social circumstances?

Gainsborough was never by any means a hireling. Even the *élite* of Bath had occasion to know that the appreciation of their charms which Gainsborough endeavoured to express was not merely to be bargained for like any marketable commodity. Art was to him but an expression of himself; and whether in sylvan solitudes or in the gay throng of life, his one aim was to render his own sense of the beautiful in whatever form it might appeal to him. Thus it was that he lived in Bath, among the fine folk of the land; attracted to it by the opportunities that it offered to his genius, and responding to the beauty of form and feature which he saw around him with impulsive sympathy for the work that Van Dyck had done before him.

That a painter so English to his heart's core as was Gainsborough should have come into contact with what was then the first city in England, for the higher graces of life, was indeed fortunate for the artist as well as for his art. There are, of course, those who will always think that his genius was essentially for landscape and for the lowlier forms of life, and that he could not have exceeded himself had he never painted portraits at all. In sympathy and insight, I think nothing can be finer than his later peasant loves. Yet Art at least knows no

## Picturesque Past

social divisions, and Gainsborough's lords and ladies are only a little less strangers to pathos and beauty of life than are his innocent cottage children and their sweet, melancholy mothers. The day of the dandy is fortunately now past, but it is not past our compassion. It had been a bad thing for Art if the revolution of a century in changing silks and satins into sober cloth, had been more quickly accomplished. If the dandies are a good riddance to us, it is partly because they have had their day. Many a social fantasy must be chased like shadow before the dawn of the years; but if imaginative sympathy might save anything from the rout of fast fleeing systems, there is nothing more worthy of such a tender office than the picturesque society of the late eighteenth century. This, indeed, is the *tempus actum* which has a charming number of *laudatores*. So close to us in years as to interest us personally, as it were, with the doings of our own great grandparents, its charm and grace have an element of homeliness which we cannot feel in more distant epochs, though more brilliantly coloured. One can feel the beat of life in remoter times and climes.

One remembers particularly that the inner life of man and its passionate reflex in the human face have called forth the efforts of the greatest artists in portrait painting for generations before Reynolds and Gainsborough were born. Yet no one pretends that he loves the faces by the Italian, Spanish, or Flemish masters as he loves those by Reynolds and Gainsborough. Is not a

*The  
"Human  
Face  
Divine"*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

little of the reason for this that Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands have a past that does not appeal to us with such personal closeness as Hanoverian England? There is, of course, one other consideration. Unless the "human face divine," as portrayed in Art, is a mere empty phrase, it is generally felt that the divinity of looks has been better expressed by the modern than by the mediæval painters. The mediævalists could be divine enough, but with such a difference as to mark a chasm between their time and ours. For them it meant religious mysticism investing the human form from without; all that the artist means by the phrase nowadays is the revelation of the human soul from within. Their highest conceptions were embodied in pictures of the Madonna and the Saints; the moderns think rather of the glory of the simplest human countenance. As a consequence, there is something in the British masters which we seek in vain among the great Italians.

Nowhere, certainly, in the purely human sense, do you find such loveliness as in the English women painted by Gainsborough. The Italians *Mediæval-* could not paint their women so, largely *ists and* because of the difference in the idea of *Moderns* divinity as between the modern and the mediæval mind, just referred to. It would be unfair, however, to imply in this any prejudice to either of these ideas. They are very largely due to difference of temperament. Mediæval painters had none the less a spiritual conception. If they could not paint the face of man so beautifully as could the British masters, it was

## Temperament in Art

because they thought his life was vile, and they thought life was vile because they thought God was good. For them goodness did indeed exist; but it was of God, not man. Therefore the very highest beauty was transferred by them to their religious conceptions. This is a matter which goes much deeper than appears upon the surface. It is a matter of individual temperament. For some the burthen of life is one of sadness—its perpetual wickedness and estrangement from God; for others, it is one of great joy and gladness—the essential goodness of life through the nearness of God in man and in nature. This relativity of Art to contemporary conceptions is only proper to remember: the greatest artist, after all, is but the creature of his time in thought and temperament.

Of all the influences of the time that created Gainsborough, it is undoubtedly to the social life of Bath that he owed the most in his power of painting portraits. It is curious to recall now the conditions of the city when Gainsborough found his way there. *Beau Nash* He entered it at perhaps its happiest period, if not its most brilliant. By 1760 the great master of ceremonies, the virtual King of Bath, the famous Beau Nash, had outlived the glories of the heyday of his reign. He died in the following year, and no doubt Gainsborough saw his funeral, which was a public ceremonial. It has been pointed out that this extraordinary character was something more than a human oddity. His despotic rule over the Pump-room was more than that of any actual sovereign over any part of



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

his dominions; yet how human he was withal! From a needy adventurer, a student at Oxford and the Inns of Court, and some time a soldier, he came to Bath and made it what it quickly became. The most despotic acts which are recorded of his reign seem human enough when compared to the deference that has sometimes been demanded by other despots in etiquette. And the same may be said of the society of Bath generally. As one thinks of their fashionable frivolities, of the tremendous deference which they paid to costume and to personal appearance, no less than to *aplomb*, both in speech and in presence, of their wit, of their gallantry, one never dreams that the beaux and the belles of England were paying court to an inhuman monster of social conventions. With all their elegance and refinement—false and arbitrary as these often were—there is always a humanness about these Georgian gentry which causes them to compare favourably with any servitors of form, of Court, and of beauty in any place or time.

But little had been changed in the ceremonial of Bath when Gainsborough dwelt there. It was still a time when ladies sat indoors all day to avoid disturbing their *coiffures*, ever so slightly, for the dance at night. If we may credit Fielding, some dames went to the length of trying to appear ugly by day for the sake of the contrast which this would give by night. However this may be, formality and etiquette had lost little of their power in Gainsborough's day. It is strange to think that





"Sketch : Landscape with Waggon " (p. 95).



## Prices at Bath

to such surroundings Gainsborough's portraiture should have owed so much. How far his sitters may have been subject to the extravagances of the popular assemblies in Bath we do not always know; but the faces which he has preserved to us from this fantastic period are as untrammelled by convention in the artistic sense as was Gainsborough himself in the social sense.

Gainsborough had not long to wait in the gay city before making his merit known, and his wife soon discovered that her fears that her husband would be removed from their new home to a debtors' prison were groundless. At first

*Friends  
in Bath*

Gainsborough charged only eight guineas for a bust portrait, but afterwards he raised his price to forty guineas. For a full-length his charge was a hundred guineas. He soon made friends with the famous actors and musicians who visited Bath. These friends included Garrick, Quin, and Foote; his son-in-law, Fischer, the hautboy-player; Giardini, the violinist; Abel, the celebrated player of the viol-da-gamba; Linley, the concert director, and his daughter, the beauty and singer whom Sheridan married; and Jackson of Exeter, to whom Gainsborough wrote the series of letters now in the possession of the Royal Academy. Jackson himself has left on record an amusing account of some of the eccentricities of Gainsborough's artistic temperament:—

"In the early part of my life," he says, "I became acquainted with Thomas Gainsborough, the painter, and as his character was perhaps better known to me than to

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

any other person, I will endeavour to divest myself of every partiality, and speak of him as he really was.

*Gainsborough's Eccentricities* I am the rather induced to this by seeing accounts of him and his works given by people who were unacquainted with either, and consequently have been mistaken in both. Gainsborough's profession was painting, and music was his amusement; yet there were times when music seemed to be his employment, and painting his diversion. As his skill has been celebrated, I will, before I speak of him as a painter, mention what degree of merit he professed as a musician.

“When I first knew him he lived at Bath, where Giardini had been exhibiting his then unrivalled powers on the violin. His excellent performances made Gainsborough enamoured of that instrument, and conceiving, like the servant-maid in the *Spectator*, that the music lay in the fiddle, he was frantic until he possessed the very instrument which had given him so much pleasure, but seemed much surprised that the music of it remained with Giardini.

“He had scarcely recovered this shock (for it was a great one to him) when he heard Abel on the viol-di-gamba. The violin was hung on the willow—Abel's viol-di-gamba was purchased, and the house resounded with melodious thirds and fifths from morn to dewy eve! Many an *adagio* and many a minuet were begun, but

## As a Musician

none completed. This was wonderful, for it was Abel's own instrument, and therefore ought to have produced Abel's own music!

"Fortunately my friend's passion had now a fresh object—Fischer's hautboy; but I do not recollect that he deprived Fischer of his instrument, and though he procured a hautboy, I never *Fischer* heard him make the least attempt on it.

Probably his ear was too delicate to bear the disagreeable sounds which necessarily attended the first beginnings on a wind-instrument. He seemed to content himself with what he heard in public, and getting Fischer to play to him in private—not on the hautboy, but the violin; but this was a profound secret, for Fischer knew that his reputation was in danger if he pretended to excel on two instruments. (It was at this time that I heard Fischer play a solo on the violin, and accompany himself on the same instrument—the air of the solo was executed with the bow, and the accompaniment *pizzicato* with the unemployed fingers of his left hand.)

"The next time I saw Gainsborough it was in the character of King David. He had heard a harper at Bath; the performer was soon left harpless; and now Fischer, Abel, and Giardini were *As Harper* all forgotten—there was nothing like chords and *arpeggios*! He really stuck to the harp long enough to play several airs with variations, and in a little time would nearly have exhausted all the pieces usually performed on an instrument incapable of modulation (this



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

was not a pedal harp), when another visit from Abel brought him back to the viol-di-gamba. He now saw the imperfection of sudden sounds that instantly die away—if you wanted a *staccato*, it was to be had by a proper management of the bow, and you might also have notes as long as you please. The viol-di-gamba is the only instrument, and Abel the prince of musicians.

“This and occasionally a little flirtation with the fiddle, continued some years; when, as ill-luck would have it, he heard Crossdill, but by some *Crossdill* irregularity of conduct, for which I cannot account, he neither took up nor bought the violoncello. All his passion for bass was vented in description of Crossdill’s tone and bowing, which was rapturous and enthusiastic to the last degree.

“More years now passed away, when upon seeing a theorbo in a picture of Van Dyck’s, he concluded (perhaps because it was finely painted) that *The* the theorbo must be a fine instrument. He *German’s* recollected to have heard of a German professor—whom, though no more, I shall *Lute* forbear to name,—ascended *per varios gradus* to his garret, where he found him at dinner upon a roasted apple, and smoking a pipe.

“‘—,’ says he, ‘I am come to buy your lute.’

“‘To puy my lude!’

“‘Yes—come, name your price, and here is your money.’

“‘I cannot shell my lude!’

## Importunate Amateur

“‘No, not for a guinea or two, but by G—— you must sell it.’

“‘My lude ish wert much monnay! It ish wert ten guinea.’

“‘That it is, see here is the money.’

“‘Well—if I musht—but you will not take it away yourself?’

“‘Yes, yes—good-bye, ——.’

“(After he had gone down he came up again.)

“‘. . . I have done but half my errand. What is your lute worth if I have not your book?’

“‘Whad poog, Maishter Cainsporough?’

“‘Why the book of airs you have composed for the lute.’

“‘Ah, py Cot, I can never part wit my poog!’

“‘Pooh! you can make another at any time—this is the book I mean’ (putting it into his pocket).

“‘Ah, py Cot, I cannot.’

“‘Come, come, here’s another ten guineas for your book—so, once more, good-day t’ye.’ (Descends again and again comes up.) ‘But what use is your book to me if I don’t understand it? And your lute—you may take it again if you won’t teach me to play on it. Come home with me and give me my first lesson.’

“‘I will gome to-morrow.’

“‘You must come now.’

“‘I musht tress myshelf.’

“‘For what? You are the best figure I have seen to-day.’

“‘I musht be shave.’

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

“ ‘I honour your beard!’

“ ‘I musht bud on my wik.’

“ ‘D——n your wig! Your cap and beard become you. Do you think if Van Dyck was to paint you he’d let you be shaved?’

“In this manner he fluttered away his musical talents; and though possessed of ear, taste, and genius, he never had application enough to learn his notes. He scorned to take the first step, the second was of course out of his reach, and the summit became unattainable.”

With Gainsborough’s settlement at Bath, as I have already hinted, opens a new chapter in the history of the development of his art. His early Suffolk landscapes, original as they are, show signs of *Dutch Influence* his having been influenced to some extent by Dutch masters, of whom there were doubtless examples in private collections in East Anglia. A large trade was done between Holland and East Anglia, and it is believed that Gainsborough’s father himself made occasional visits to Amsterdam for business purposes. He himself may possibly have brought home a Dutch picture occasionally as a present for his wife, who, as we have seen, was a flower-painter. Whatever Gainsborough may have owed to Ruysdael and Wynants, it was not important enough for him to acknowledge; but at Wilton and elsewhere in the neighbourhood of Bath he first saw some fine Van Dycks. He seems then to have felt

## Van Dyck Influence

something of that "wild surmise" that Keats felt when first looking into Chapman's *Homer*. Gainsborough was never tired of expressing his admiration for the great Flemish master, some of whose pictures, it is said, so deeply impressed him that he could copy them from memory.

The impression which Gainsborough as a portrait-painter speedily created at Bath is indicated in a letter written by Paul Whitehead from that city to Lord Harcourt.

*His  
Portraits*

"We have a painter here," says the writer, "who takes the most exact likenesses I ever saw; his painting is coarse and slight, but has ease and spirit. Lord Villiers sat to him before he left Bath, and I hope we shall be able to bring his picture to town with us, as it is he himself, and is preferable, in my opinion, to the finest unlike picture in the universe, though it might serve for a sign. He sat only twice. The painter's name is Gainsborough."

The Van Dyck influence is not traceable in the earlier portraits of the Bath period. Sir Martin Conway thinks that the portrait of "Lady Mary Bowlby" marks the artist's transition to a more developed style. One of his earliest sitters at Bath was Mr., afterwards Earl, Nugent, the most married man perhaps of his day, for he himself not only led three brides to the altar, but his second wife had been twice a widow. He was Member of Parliament for Bristol. To the early Bath period also belongs the famous

*Early  
Bath  
Portraits*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

portrait of "Edward Orpin, Parish Clerk of Bradford-on-Avon." This picture was given by Gainsborough to Wiltshire, the carrier between Bath and London, who admired both Gainsborough and his work so much that he insisted upon carrying his pictures without payment. Gainsborough was reckless in his generosity, and gave away a large number of his pictures to his friends. To Wiltshire he gave not only the "Parish Clerk," but several other pictures, including the "Harvest Waggon."

To the central Bath period belong portraits in which the influence of Van Dyck is apparent. That period, according to Sir Martin Conway, opens with a portrait of "Garrick," now in the Stratford Town Hall. But it is in the portraits of the "Duchess of Montagu," and the "Duke of Bedford," painted in 1768, "that we can trace the earliest clear foreshadowing of the painter's final style." Amongst those whom Gainsborough painted several times were Garrick and Eliza Linley. He produced at least five portraits of Garrick, notwithstanding that he was a difficult subject to paint. The Stratford portrait was the one which the great actor himself was so pleased with that he begged Gainsborough to paint an ideal portrait of Shakespeare, a task which he attempted but never completed.

"Shakespeare shall come forthwith," he wrote in reply to Garrick's inquiry about the picture; but in





"The Watering Place" (p. 97).



## Eliza Linley

another letter he confessed, "I have been several days rubbing in and rubbing out my design of Shakespeare, and hang me! if I shall let it go or let you see it at last. I was willing, like an ass that I am, to expose myself a little out of the simple portrait way, and had a notion of showing where that inimitable poet had his ideas from, by an immediate ray darting down upon his eye turned up for the purpose; but, confound me, I can make nothing of my ideas, there has been such a fall of rain from the same quarter."

Of Eliza Linley, the subject of some of the most famous of his pictures, Gainsborough also made a clay model, which was unfortunately broken by a careless servant the day after he had finished it. Miss Linley has been described as

*A Shot at  
Shake-  
speare*

*Miss  
Linley*

"something between a woman and an angel." She was the most beautiful woman and one of the most popular singers of her day. "The conquests of this charming girl," says the writer of an introduction to Sheridan's dramatic works, "were not confined to youthful poets; for one of her enthusiastic admirers had already approached the 'down-hill of life.' This was Mr. Long, a gentleman of large fortune, who proposed marriage to her; but she, unaffected by the prospect of the immediate possession of opulence, refused his proposal, by saying that such a marriage could never lead to happiness. Nevertheless, this good man, though no doubt chagrined at this disappointment, settled upon her the sum of three thousand pounds.

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

"A formidable opponent to Sheridan's hopes soon arose in the person of Mr. Mathews, a man of large fortune and accomplished manners, who succeeded in making a deep impression on the heart of this highly-gifted maiden of sixteen; but she, becoming aware of the wickedness of his designs, confided her troubles to Sheridan, who, knowing Mathews to be a married man, persuaded Miss Linley to leave Bath, and accompanied her to London, and thence to France, where he suggested to her the propriety of being married as soon as possible, as she could not, after elopement, again appear in England but as his wife. 'He was, therefore,' he said, 'resolved to deposit her in a convent till she had consented, by the ceremony of a marriage, to confirm to him that right of protecting her which he had now but temporarily assumed.' It did not, we may suppose, require much eloquence to convince her heart of the truth of this reasoning; and accordingly, at a little village not far from Calais, they were married about the latter end of March 1772, by a priest well known for his services on such occasions."

It is probable that Gainsborough painted his portraits of actors and musicians without fee. He evidently pressed Quin, for instance, to sit to him. When Quin objected, Gainsborough said, "If you let me take your likeness, I shall live for ever." There were some people, however, whom Gainsborough could not or would not paint. A pompous person came to sit to him one day, and insisted upon arranging his dress and attitudinising in a

*Uncon-  
genial  
Sitters*

## His Sitters' Faces

way which made Gainsborough growl, "This will never do." When the sitter had at length put himself in what he regarded as the right position, addressing the painter, he said: "Now, sir, I desire you not to overlook the dimple in my chin." "Damn the dimple in your chin," said Gainsborough; "I shall paint neither the one nor the other." His quarrel with Thicknesse was no doubt due to the difficulty Gainsborough felt about completing his portrait of that somewhat fussy and patronising person.

He had a keen eye for facial peculiarities, and his friend, Sir George Beaumont, tells a story of him illustrating the awkward fix in which the keenness of his observation once placed him. *An Eye for Faces*  
He was staying at the house of a certain nobleman, who assembled his household regularly for family prayers. "I dared not go," said Gainsborough, "for fear of laughing at the chaplain, whose puritanical countenance wrought most whimsically upon me."

When his host, whom he had offended by his absence, remarked, "Perhaps, Mr. Gainsborough, you have forgotten; you geniuses have wandering memories," Gainsborough could not tell his lordship the reason of his apparent discourtesy, but replied apologetically:

"No, my lord, I have not forgotten," and shortly afterwards left the house.

Gainsborough could not produce pictures that had not a pleasing effect. *Pleasant Pictures*  
The men and women who sat to him at Bath were, almost without exception, handsome. They were typical of



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

the one excellence which Mr. E. S. Dallas in his *Gay Science* says foreigners allow to the English race. That excellence is the gift of personal beauty. Sang the Emperor Frederick as a troubadour:—

“ Me the Catalan ladies please ;  
Me the cavaliers of France ;  
Honour of the Genoese ;  
Minstrel music of Provence ;  
High Castilian courtesies ;  
And Trevis for the dance ;  
Sinews of the Aragonese ;  
English hands and countenance.”

Juan Lorenzo Segura, the Spanish poet, also pays the English a like compliment in a less civil way:—

“ Impetuous and light  
Are the citizens of Spain,  
The French of valiant knights  
The character maintain ;  
And always in the van  
Are the young men of Champagne,  
And the Suabians in their gifts  
No costs nor cares restrain ;  
The Bretons are renowned  
For their zealous love of art ;  
The Lombards ever act  
An ostentatious part ;  
The English are most fair—  
But withal most false of heart.”

“ There is but one voice upon this subject,” adds Mr. Dallas, “ ever since Pope Gregory expressed his

## English Beauty

opinion in the quibble, 'That the Angles might be taken for Angels.'" It is fortunate that three great masters of portraiture, Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney, arose to prove by their canvases that the beauty which foreigners allow to be typical of the English race was widely diffused in the eighteenth century.

Gainsborough was as successful with children as with men and women. The peasant girls and boys whom he has introduced into his landscapes are particularly charming owing to their suggestion of the subdued melancholy characteristic of great art. Gainsborough was

*Gains-  
borough's  
Children*

the first of British painters to give artistic expression to keen sympathy with the poor. Whenever I gaze into the sweet sad faces of his rustic children I can hardly suppress a feeling of regret that he ever took the advice of Governor Thicknesse to settle in Bath. Had he stayed at Ipswich, to saunter along the banks of the Orwell or through the valley of the Stour; to dream on amid the varied landscape scenery of his native Suffolk, and to study the short and simple annals of the toilers of its fields, his genius might have caught a finer inspiration than that which he derived from the contemplation of the gaieties of the city which Beau Nash held as his demesne. He might, indeed, have anticipated François Millet, and given to the world types of beauty tempered by pathos which would have appealed more powerfully to the imagination and the emotions even than the beautiful human

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

forms and faces of the lords and ladies who sat to him at the fashionable metropolis of the West. That he was a man of profound feeling and wide human sympathy we know from many acts of generosity recorded of him, and that he was not satisfied that he was fulfilling his rightful mission at Bath is evident from this passage in one of his letters—to be given, later on, *in extenso*—to his friend Jackson:—

“I’m sick of portraits,” he wrote, “and wish very much to take my viol-da-gam and walk off to some sweet village where I can paint landscapes and enjoy the fag-end of life in quietness and ease. But these fine ladies and their tea-drinkings, dancings, husband-huntings, etc., etc., etc., will fob me out of the last ten years.” The words were prophetic. He died at the age of sixty-one.

Light-hearted and gay as he was in the company of his friends, his soul was haunted by the mystery and the pathos of life. Hence he was able to impart to his landscapes with peasant figures an emotional charm which even Constable could not define, but which he could never contemplate without feeling his eyes moisten. It was Gainsborough’s ambition from the beginning of his career to be a landscape-painter, and had he followed his natural bent and developed his art along the lines suggested by his early landscapes and the earliest of his portraits, that of “Tom Peartree,” the world would have missed his duchesses, his countesses, and his Perditas; his sovereigns, his soldiers, and his states-

## Annals of the Poor

men; but he would, I think, have bequeathed to mankind a nobler heritage of art-treasures characterised by the profound humanness to which not only the French peasant-painter, but also in another department of art Burns and Crabbe, still earlier than Millet, gave expression.

To George Crabbe, also a Suffolk man, belongs the honour of having been the first English poet to break with the idyllic treatment of rural life, and to present in artistic forms the frightful economic conditions under which the poor lived in England in the latter part of the eighteenth century. It was he who wrote:—

“Ye gentle souls who dream of rural ease,  
Whom the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please;  
Go! if the peaceful cot your praises share,  
Go look within—ask if peace be there:  
If peace be his, that drooping weary sire;  
Or theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire;  
Or hers, that matron pale, whose trembling hand  
Turns on the wretched hearth th’ expiring brand.

“Nor yet can time itself obtain for these  
Life’s latest comforts, due respect and ease;  
For yonder see that hoary swain, whose age  
Can with no cares except its own engage;  
Who, propt on that rude staff, looks up to see  
The bare arms broken from the withering tree,  
On which, a boy, he climb’d the loftiest bough,  
Then his first joy, but his sad emblem now.”

Gainsborough stopped short at the cottage door,

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

excepting in one remarkable picture, "The Cottage Interior," which was one of the last pictures he painted.

He did not, as Crabbe did, cross the threshold to reveal to us the domestic interior of the Suffolk or Somersetshire peasant's home. This would not lend itself to the same kind of treatment that its picturesque exterior demanded. Gainsborough's "Cottage Door," with its group of a labourer's children, is one of the noblest of his pictures, and is pathetic enough to let us forgive him for not taking us inside the cottage.

We must not, however, blame Gainsborough for not being in advance of his time in his grasp of the economic problem. George Crabbe came a generation after him and arrived at manhood just at the beginning of the industrial revolution brought about, with all its horrors, by the application of machinery to production and transit. Gainsborough was then nearing the end of his career. At the beginning of it England, owing to the peaceful administration of Walpole, was wonderfully prosperous. Foreign trade enormously increased, and the Orwell was crowded with shipping. Agriculture, moreover, revived. As Professor Thorold Rogers said, "the landlords of the eighteenth century made the English farmer the best agriculturist in the world, the landlords of the nineteenth beggared him." The inference therefore is that the rural poor in Gainsborough's day, especially in his earlier period, were fairly well off—far better off than they were after the inventions of Ark-





" Musidora " (p. 133).



## Love of Children

wright and Crompton silenced the humming of the loom in every cottage home of England. There is just enough of sadness, however, in the various groups of Gainsborough's peasant children to reveal to us the depths of his sympathetic nature. He loved children, as indeed also did his great rival, Sir Joshua Reynolds. But Reynolds's children are either cherubs or tiny darlings of the *salons*. Gainsborough's are wildings of Nature. The atmosphere they breathe is redolent of the balmy breath of the hawthorn or of the honeysuckle. His pictures wherever he introduces rustic children seem to be set to the music of Blake's *Songs of Innocence*. You fancy you can hear the

"Piping down the valleys wild,  
Piping songs of pleasant glee."

In whatever mood he paints, whether in storm or in calm, his children are perfectly natural.

"I remember being once driven," says Hazlitt, "by a shower of rain for shelter into a picture-dealer's shop in Oxford Street, where there stood on the floor a copy of Gainsborough's 'Shepherd Boy' with the thunderstorm coming on. What a truth and beauty was there! He stands with his hands clasped, looking up with a mixture of timidity and resignation, eyeing a magpie chattering over his head, while the wind is rustling in the branches. It was like a vision breathed on the canvas. I have been fond of Gainsborough

"The  
*Shepherd*  
*Boy*"

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

ever since." This picture has unfortunately been destroyed.

C. R. Leslie, in his *Handbook for Young Painters*, says Gainsborough's "Barefoot Child" on her way to the well with her little dog under her arm is unequalled by anything of the kind in the world; and Northcote declared that the expression and truth of nature in the "Girl Feeding Pigs" were never surpassed. Sir Joshua Reynolds was so struck with this picture that he bought it. One of Gainsborough's two daughters was his model for the peasant girl who is represented climbing up by the wheel in his famous picture of the "Harvest Waggon." This canvas must be included among the best examples of the works in which he displayed the variety of his powers as an animal painter as well as a landscapist and master of portraiture.

No English painter has surpassed him in his "infinite variety." His own remark about Sir Joshua: "Damn him, how various he is," applies with much more truth to himself. He could paint anything, and touched nothing that he did not make a joy for ever. In portraiture his variety is conspicuous in his children. I cannot agree with Northcote's criticism of Sir Joshua Reynolds's remark that no one ever produced more than six original things. Northcote says, "Five out of the six would be found upon examination to be repetitions of the first. A man can no more produce six original works than he can

*His  
Infinite  
Variety*

## Individuality of Type

be six individuals at once. Whatever is the strong and prevailing bent of his genius, he will stamp upon some master-work; and what he does else will be only the same thing over again, a little better or a little worse; or if he goes out of his way in search of variety and to avoid himself, he will merely become a commonplace man or an imitator of others." This is as much as to say that when you have seen one of the works of a great master you have seen them all; but that is not true of Gainsborough. He gives us in his pictures of children distinct types marked with the impress of his originality. The "Blue Boy," the most striking of them all, is not a replica of "Tom Peartree," or, say, of any of the children of the "Baillie Family Group," but a distinctly original conception. *The "Blue Boy"* The defenders of Northcote's view might urge, no doubt, that the "Blue Boy" is the highest expression of Gainsborough's genius in portraiture and sums up the finest characteristics of his style, and that when you have seen the "Blue Boy," you have also seen the "Pink Boy," and the head of the youth that reclines on the shoulder of Miss Linley in the artist's picture of that lady and her brother, a painting which also belongs to Gainsborough's best period.

Different accounts have been given of the origin of the "Blue Boy," the commonly received one being that Gainsborough painted this wonderful picture in order to confute a contention to which Sir Joshua Reynolds gave expression in one of his Royal Academy lectures, that the dominant colour in a picture should be



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

yellow, red, or a yellowish-white. This story, however, is now discredited by admirers of Gainsborough's genius and character and thoughtful students of his life and works. Gainsborough cared very little about theories of Art, and was certainly not a controversialist. His sole object as a painter was to produce beautiful pictures. It therefore seems absurd to suppose that one of the most beautiful of all his pictures should have been painted to expose a fallacy, or to hold up a rival's theory to ridicule. No great picture was ever produced from an unworthy motive. Sir Martin Conway says that the date 1779 generally assigned to the "Blue Boy" should be 1770, as the picture bears traces of the style of the artist's best period—that is to say, the latter part of his sojourn at Bath. The play of thoughtfulness and purity over the features of the "Blue Boy" is similar to that which gives such a wonderful charm to the noble head of the youth in the picture of "Eliza Anne Linley and her Brother." Gainsborough, unfortunately, scarcely ever dated or signed his pictures, but that "Eliza Anne Linley and her Brother" was painted in 1768 is evident from a passage in one of the artist's letters to Jackson of that date.

Writing to excuse himself from spending a few days with his friend, he says—"I wish I could . . . but I have begun a large picture of Tommy Linley and his sister and cannot come. I suppose you know the boy is bound for Italy the first opportunity." A portrait of his nephew, Edward Gardiner, a boy in a blue dress, painted

## “The Blue Boy”

by Gainsborough about 1768, which came into the possession of a descendant, the Rev. Edward Gardiner, was, according to family tradition, an experiment in blue made by the artist with so much success that he decided upon the still freer treatment of that colour in his portrait of Master Jonathan Buttall. This favours the assumption that 1770 and not 1779 is the date of the “Blue Boy.” If so, the story of its having been undertaken to prove that Reynolds was wrong in his theory of colour may be dismissed as pure invention, for the lecture in which Reynolds pleaded for the predominance of warm colour was not delivered until some years afterwards.

The “Blue Boy” is a full-length portrait of a son of a wealthy bourgeois who made his money in the iron-mongery business. His shop was in Greek Street, Soho, but after making his fortune he probably retired to Bath. By the magic of the artist's touch the boy has been made world-famous for all time. The picture ranks with the masterpieces of the greatest painters, and it is a misfortune that it is not public property. It is in the Duke of Westminster's private collection at Grosvenor House in London. Many copies have been made of this famous picture, one of which by John Hoppner, R.A., now in New York, is claimed by some American critics to be the original. There is no evidence, however, to warrant the suspicion that Hoppner, who obtained the “Blue Boy” from the Prince of Wales, was dishonest enough to sell a copy of it instead of the original to Earl Grosvenor.

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

Another fine copy of the "Blue Boy" is in Trinity College, Cambridge. Blue was the favourite colour not only of Gainsborough but of John Keats, who sang :—

"Blue ! 'Tis the life of heaven—the domain  
Of Cynthia,—the wide palace of the sun,—  
The tent of Hesperus, and all his train,—  
The bosomer of clouds, gold, grey, and dun.  
Blue ! 'Tis the life of waters :—Ocean  
And all its vassal streams, pools numberless,  
May rage and foam and fret, but never can  
Subside, if not to dark blue nativeness.  
Blue ! Gentle cousin of the forest green,  
Married to green in all the sweetest flowers,—  
Forget-me-not,—the Bluebell,—and, that Queen  
Of secrecy, the Violet : what strange powers  
Hast thou, as a mere shadow ! But how great,  
When in an eye thou art, alive with fate !"

## CHAPTER V.

### LANDSCAPE WORK.

Country around Bath—East and West—Constable and Gainsborough—  
Pioneer in landscape—Elusive likeness—The spirit of scenery  
—Reynolds on Gainsborough—The magic of his art—Gains-  
borough on his method—Miller's view—Impressions from Nature  
—The sadness of his art.

THE country round Bath is not unlike the country round Ipswich and Sudbury. It is a few miles from the sea, and the river Avon winds like a silver thread through its picturesque undulations. With a moister climate, it is more thickly wooded and richer in emeralds than East Anglia, though not so varied in light colours. Gainsborough, as he wandered along the banks of the Avon or sauntered afoot through the fields and glades in its neighbourhood, must often have been reminded of the scenery of his beloved Suffolk that first inspired his artistic genius. Some of his best landscapes were painted at Bath, but excepting that they are more thorough in *technique* than the landscapes painted in his native region, there is really nothing to differentiate them from his earlier works. If we did not

*Country  
around  
Bath*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

know that they were painted in the West, we might be apt to conclude they were painted in the East.

*East and West* In fact Gainsborough never lost sight of the scenes of his youth, and it was not until late in life, when he made a tour through the

Lake Country, that we notice a new departure in his landscape work. In one of the last pictures that he painted he gives us a mountain for a background, a fact which suggests that had he travelled in Switzerland or Tirol he might have anticipated Turner and been the first of the world's painters to transfer to canvas his impressions of Alpine scenery. The famous Bath landscapes "The Harvest Waggon," "The Market Cart," and two "Watering Places" are reminiscences of Suffolk.

Between the Stour and the Orwell the country teems with suggestions of both Gainsborough and Constable.

*Constable and Gainsborough* The general characteristics of this delightful region are faithfully presented in the works of these two masters, whom they impressed with equal charm and distinctness. Sudbury, Gainsborough's birthplace, is some

fifteen miles from East Bergholt, near the Essex border, which was the home of Constable, and the intervening scenery was well known to them both. The fold of the fields and the grouping of trees, the very light of the sky and the mists of the atmosphere, are reminiscences of the Stour which occur in their landscapes with truth and tenderness. They were both sincere and simple lovers of their native scenery, and





"The Baillies" (p. 140).



## Generaliser of Landscape

before they were landscapists they had learned to follow Nature as their only mistress. Wide as are the differences in the productions of their genius, they are one in the source of their inspiration, and one in their fidelity to the true province of their art.

Sir Walter Armstrong has remarked on the difficulty of tracing Gainsborough to his actual sources. He points out that in the case of Constable the task is easy. While, however, Dedham Valley abounds with resemblances to the Bergholt master, which come home to the student almost without seeking for them, the barer fields about Sudbury and the greater lapse of time since Gainsborough frequented them yield but scanty materials for any actual comparisons between his work and his originals. There is one broad distinction between Gainsborough and Constable. Though both set out to see Nature for themselves, and to paint only the scenery which was familiar to them from personal intimacy, yet their development was divergent, and their maturity yielded very different results. I find a lack of identified materials in Gainsborough's landscapes, as compared with Constable's, and the reason seems to be that Gainsborough attained a freedom in his art which consisted not merely in his independence in observing Nature, but in his feeling for interpreting her. Based as this feeling was on actual knowledge, it gave him a power for generalisation and idealisation which kept him true to the whole, while subordinating the parts of a picture.

Gainsborough was, it should be remembered, the

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

pioneer of British landscape-painting; and a certain tendency to inwardness and to the play of thought and of temperament must therefore be conceded him. He loved his native woods and pastures no less than did Constable, but he taught himself to copy their minutest details, not for copying's sake only, but for something higher. He had the soul of a poet; and though, perhaps, he was scarcely conscious of it at first, his secret of intuitive power was bound to assert itself. When once he had learned to be guided by the actual forms of things, and to restrain himself from wandering into mere fancy and inventiveness, his imaginative temperament came steadily into play, and Nature appeared to him through the true medium of Art.

He could derive higher motives than mere imitation of natural scenery; and long as he practised drawing oaks and elms in his early years, it has been remarked that a critic would be puzzled to know to what species the trees of his Bath landscapes might be said to belong. Sir Joshua Reynolds, indeed, seems unable to decide whether Gainsborough's portraits were the more admirable for exact resemblances or his landscapes for their "portrait-like representations." To later critics, however, the great President's judgment has appeared singularly inept. Gainsborough's representations of Nature charm us nowadays, not by anything "portrait-like," but by an elusive likeness.

It was given to Gainsborough to convey the spirit of

## Nature and Art

scenery, and he did this neither by close imitation nor by picturesque invention. His landscapes, while true to Nature, are true to Art also; and whatever theories may be held as to the relationship of the two, it is plain that they cannot be quite one and the same thing. Nature is the artist's objective, but Art is the medium in which he expresses its meaning for him. In proportion as Nature has a meaning for us also, we win the artist's secrets and enter with him into mysterious sympathies with the hidden power of scenes which we perhaps never saw. Through Gainsborough, the appeal of external nature to our nature is the simplest, the sweetest, and the most universal. He paints the most familiar sights—the woods and the meadows and the meandering streams; he delights in rugged roadsides with uncouth stiles beneath gaunt, denuded trees; and above all, he gives to his simple scenery the unspeakable charm of the life of cottages and of the toil of farms. Withal, however, he never descends to unnecessary detail: his rustic children never repel us; and human labour seems not undignified. Whatever truth there may be in Ruskin's criticism of Constable for his "morbid preference for a low order of things," it is something that Gainsborough has never incurred this charge. On the contrary, critics have seen in him, in his power of generalisation and his sinking of details, a reminiscence of Rubens. Whatever dignity this resemblance may give him, his grace and power are none the less his own; and whatever may be said about the difficulty of

*The Spirit  
of Scenery*



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

identifying his sites and materials, and even of distinguishing his oaks and his elms, his scenes are English, and neither Flemish nor Dutch nor Italian masters had any influence on his maturity. In looking at his landscapes, we seem to know Suffolk or the West of England as he knew it himself. His temperament becomes ours, and scenes we never saw live for us for ever by the spirit he found in them.

The magic of Gainsborough's art, however, can only be appreciated when we look at his pictures at the right distance. Sir Joshua Reynolds pointed this out in his famous Fourteenth Discourse:—  
*Reynolds*  
*on Gains-*  
*borough* “It is certain,” he says, “that all those odd scratches and marks which, on close examination, are so observable in Gainsborough's pictures, and which, even to experienced painters, appear rather the effect of accident than design; this chaos, this uncouth and shapeless appearance by a kind of magic, at a certain distance assumes form, and all the parts seem to drop into their proper places, so that we can hardly refuse acknowledging the full effect of diligence, under the appearance of chance and hasty negligence.”

The likeness of a portrait, Sir Joshua observed, consists more in preserving the general effect of the countenance than in the most minute finishing of the features or any of the particular parts. “Now, Gainsborough's portraits were often little more, in regard to finishing or determining the form of the features, than what generally attends a dead colour; but as he was

## Tout Ensemble

always attentive to the general effect, or whole together, I have often imagined that this unfinished manner contributed even to that striking resemblance for which his portraits were so remarkable." And then Sir Joshua goes on, characteristically enough, to suggest that Gainsborough's fame as a likeness-maker depended not a little on the simple fact that he left so much for the spectator to fill in as he pleased.

The "Harvest Waggon" and the "Market Cart," both of which were painted at Bath, are fine examples illustrating this impressionist method of Gainsborough's, a method adopted by other masters of landscapes, especially by Turner. *The Magic of his Art* Looked at closely, the row of fishermen in Turner's "Ship in Distress off Yarmouth" appears to be a collection of "odd scratches and marks," but at the right distance they assume the form of life-like humanity.

In an amusing letter to his friend Edgar at Colchester, Gainsborough explains his own views on this subject. I quote the letter because it also reveals the rollicking joyousness to which Gainsborough often gave way:—

"I am favoured with your obliging letter, and return you many thanks for your kind intention. I thought I should have been at Colchester by this time, as I promised my sister I would the first opportunity; but business comes in, and being chiefly in the Face-way, I'm afraid to put people off when they are in a mind to sit.

*Gains-  
borough  
on his  
Method*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

"You please me much by saying that no other fault is found in your picture than the roughness of the surface, for that part being of use in giving force to the effect at a proper distance, and what a judge of painting knows an original from a copy by; in short, being the touch of the pencil which is harder to preserve than smoothness. I am much better pleased that they should spy out things of that kind, than to see an eye half-an-inch out of its place, or a nose out of drawing when viewed at a proper distance. I don't think it would be more ridiculous for a person to put his nose close to the canvas and say the colours smell offensive, than to say how rough the paint lies; for one is just as material as the other with regard to hurting the effect and drawing of a picture. Sir Godfrey Kneller used to tell them that pictures were not made to smell of; and what made his pictures more valuable than others with the connoisseurs was his pencil or touch.

"I hope, sir, you'll pardon this dissertation upon pencil and touch, for if I gain no better point than to make you and Mr. Clubb laugh when you next meet at the sign of the 'Tankard,' I shall be very well contented. I'm sure I could not paint his picture for laughing, he gave such a description of eating and drinking at that place.

"I little thought you were a lawyer when I said that not one in ten were worth hanging! I told Clubb of that, and he seemed to think I was lucky that I did not say one in a hundred. It's too late to ask your pardon now, but really, sir, I never saw one of your profession

## At Once and as a Whole

look so honest in my life, and that's the reason I concluded you were in the wool trade. Sir Jaspar Wood was so kind as to set me right; otherwise, perhaps I should have made more blunders.—I am, etc., etc.”

“Very few painters,” says Millet, “are sufficiently careful as to the effect seen at a distance great enough to see all at once and as a whole. Even if a picture comes together as it should, you hear people say, ‘Yes, but when you come near it is not finished!’ Then of another, which does not look like anything at the distance from which it should be seen: ‘But look at it near by; see how it is finished!’”

*Millet's  
View*

“Nothing counts except the fundamental. If a tailor tries on a coat, he stands off at a distance great enough to see the fit. If he likes the general look, it is time enough then to examine the details; but if he should be satisfied with making fine button-holes and other accessories, even if they were *chefs-d'œuvres*, on a badly-cut coat, he will none the less have made a bad job. Is not this true of a piece of architecture, or of anything else? It is the manner of conception of a work which should strike us first, and nothing ought to go outside of that. It is an atmosphere beyond which nothing can exist. There should be a *milieu* of one kind or another, but that which is adopted should rule.”

There is another criticism of Millet's which might have been written after a study of Gainsborough's landscapes, though I am not aware that the French



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

master ever saw a Gainsborough. "We should accustom ourselves," he says, "to receive from Nature all our impressions, whatever they may be and whatever temperament we may have. We should be saturated and impregnated with her, and think what she wishes to make us think. Truly, she is rich enough to supply us all. And whence should we draw, if not from the fountain-head? Why for ever urge as a supreme aim to be reached that which the great minds have already discovered in her, because they have mined her with constancy and labour, as Palissy says? But nevertheless they have no right to set up for mankind one example for ever. By that means the production of one man would become the type and the aim of all the productions of the future.

"Men of genius are gifted with a sort of divining-rod; some discover in Nature this, others that, according to their kind of scent. Their productions assure you that he who finds is formed to find; but it is funny to see how, when the treasure is unearthed, people come for ages to scratch at that one hole. The point is to know where to find truffles. A dog who has not scent will be but a poor hunter if he can only run at sight of another who scents the game, and who of course must always be the first. And if we only hunt through imitateness, we cannot run with much spirit, for it is impossible to be enthusiastic about nothing.

"Finally, men of genius have the mission to show,





"Mrs. Moody and her Children" (p. 140).



## Artist's Mission

out of the riches of Nature, only that which they are permitted to take away, and to show them to those who would not have suspected their presence or ever found them, as they have not the necessary faculties. They serve as translators and interpreters to those who cannot understand her language. They can say, like Palissy: 'You see these things in my cabinet.' They, too, may say: 'If you give yourself up to Nature as we have done, she will let you take away of these treasures according to your powers. You only need intelligence and good-will.'

"It must be an enormous vanity or an enormous folly that makes certain men believe that they can rectify the pretended lack of taste or the errors of Nature. On what authority do they lean? With those who do not love her and who do not trust her, she does not let herself be understood, and retires into her shell. She must be constrained and reserved with them. And of course they say: 'The grapes are green. Since we cannot reach them, let us speak ill of them.' We might here apply the words of the prophet: 'God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.' Nature gives herself to those who take the trouble to court her, but she wishes to be loved exclusively. We love certain works only because they proceed from her. Every other work is pedantic and empty."

The greatness of Gainsborough's art is its sadness. Edgar Allan Poe, in his *Philosophy of Composition*, remarks that "all experience has shown that the tone of the manifestation of Beauty is sadness. Beauty of

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

whatever kind in its supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus

*The Sadness of his Art* the most legitimate of all the poetical tones." The magic of Gainsborough's hand—that hand which, as Ruskin said, was "as light as the sweep of a cloud, as swift as the

flash of a sunbeam"—would not have counted for much had it not moved to the pulsations of a deeply emotional nature. Constable, as I have said, could not look at Gainsborough's pictures without feeling tears in his eyes, and I think it must have been after gazing at Gainsborough's "Harvest Waggon" that Tennyson wrote, in *The Princess*:—

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean.  
Tears from the depth of some divine despair  
Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes  
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more."

## CHAPTER VI.

### QUARREL WITH THICKNESSE.

Unspoiled—Gainsborough Dupont—Thicknesse as patron—Rupture with the Governor—Thicknesse's account—Portrait of Mrs. Thicknesse—A fair exchange—The Governor's portrait begun—Portrait of Fischer—The painter's apology—Taken at his word—The Governor offended—The viol paid for.

FAME and fortune did not corrupt Gainsborough. He was a man of strong family affections, and kept in touch, during the days of his prosperity, with his relatives and old friends both at *Unspoiled* Ipswich and Sudbury. He frequently sent help to "Scheming Jack," and was no doubt visited at Bath by his brother Humphrey and his sisters, two of whom, it will be remembered, were married to citizens of Bath. Gainsborough also took under his charge a nephew, Gainsborough Dupont, who assisted in the studio and, as we have already seen, gave great promise of achieving distinction in his uncle's profession. It is said that there are evidences in some of Gainsborough's later portraits of work by another hand, and that that hand was Gainsborough Dupont's. He survived his uncle only nine years. Shortly after his

*Gains-  
borough  
Dupont*



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

uncle's death Gainsborough Dupont had a quarrel with Thicknesse, who, it appears, had brought certain charges against both the uncle and nephew. The following dignified letter, which Dupont wrote to Thicknesse, speaks for itself:—

“25th April, 1789.

“SIR,—Your letter to my Aunt has given her, as you intended it should, great uneasiness. I forbear at this moment using the epithets so unmanly a conduct deserves, in the hope that, on reflection, you will not carry into execution the threats you insinuate of attacking her and my late uncle's reputation. Whilst he was living, he was the proper guardian of both; now he is, unhappily for us, no more, I feel myself bound in gratitude, as well as affection, to supply that place. I therefore, in the most emphatic manner, advise you to be cautious how you proceed; for I will not be indifferent either to the attacks of his fame or her reputation.

“I am, Sir,

“Your obedient, humble servant,

“GAINSBOROUGH DUPONT.”

That Thicknesse was a strange mixture seems to be beyond dispute. According to Fulcher, he was fond of scandalmongery, and he patronised Gainsborough in a way that was bound to disgust *Thicknesse as Patron* him sooner or later. Their relations, however, seem to have been friendly enough for a long

## How the Trouble Arose

time after Gainsborough had settled at Bath. Thicknesse frequently joined in the festive gatherings beneath the artist's hospitable roof, but at length they quarrelled, and, as Thicknesse had been the cause of Gainsborough's removal from Ipswich to Bath, so also he was the cause, in less happy circumstances, of his removal from Bath to London.

The following is Thicknesse's own account of the breach of the friendly relations between himself and the man of genius whom he somewhat extravagantly claimed as his *protégé*, forgetting that the genius of Gainsborough had been discovered by his own people, especially by his uncle, the Rev. Humphrey Burroughs, headmaster of the Sudbury Grammar School:—

*Rupture  
with the  
Governor*

"I cannot help relating a very singular and extraordinary circumstance which arose between him, Mrs. Thicknesse, and myself; for though it is very painful for me to reflect on, much more to relate, it turned out fortunately for him, and thereby lessened my concern, as he certainly had never gone from Bath to London had not this untoward circumstance arisen between us; and it is no less singular that I, who had taken so much pains to remove him from Ipswich to Bath, should be the cause, twenty years afterwards, of driving him from thence.

*Thick-  
nesse's  
Account*

"He had asked me, when he first went to Bath, to give him the portrait of a little Spanish girl, painted on copper, with a guitar in her hand and a feather in her hair, a picture now at his house in Pall Mall, the study

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

of which, he has often told me, made him a portrait-painter; and as he afterwards painted Mrs. Thicknesse's full-length, before she was my wife, he rolled it up in a landscape of the same size, and of his own pencil, and sent it to me to London by the waggon. I was much surprised at the first opening of it to see the head of a large oak-tree instead of Mrs. Thicknesse's head, but I soon found between the two pictures a note as follows: 'Lest Mrs. Thicknesse's picture should have been damaged in the carriage to town, this landscape is put as a case to protect it, and I now return you many thanks for having procured me the favour of her sitting to me; it has done me service, and I know it will do you pleasure.'

*Portrait of Mrs. Thicknesse*

"During our residence in Bath he had often desired me to sit to him for a companion to it, which I as often declined; not because I should have felt myself and my person too highly flattered, but because I owed Mr. Gainsborough so much regard, esteem, and friendship, that I could not bear he should toil for nothing, knowing how hard he worked for profit. However, during the last year of his residence at Bath, he fell in love with Mrs. Thicknesse's viol-di-gamba, and often when he dropped into my house and took it up offered me a hundred guineas for it. . . . At that time I had reason to believe I might not find it convenient ever to remove from my own house in the Crescent, and observing to Mrs. Thicknesse how much he admired her viol, that he had some very good ones of

## Hunger and Harmony

his own, and that she might at any time have the use of either, she consented to give him an instrument made in the year 1612, of exquisite workmanship and mellifluous tone, and which was certainly worth a hundred guineas. We then asked him and his family to supper with us, after which Mrs. Thicknesse, putting the instrument before him, desired he would play one of his best lessons upon it; this, I say, was after supper, for till poor Gainsborough had got a little borrowed courage (such was his natural modesty) he could neither play nor sing! He then played, and charmingly too, one of his dear friend Abel's lessons, and Mrs. Thicknesse told him he deserved the instrument for his reward, and desired his acceptance of it, but said: 'At your leisure give me my husband's picture to hang by the side of my own.' A hundred full-length pictures bespoke could not have given my grateful and generous friend half the pleasure, a pleasure in which I participated highly, because I knew with what delight he would fag through the day's work to rest his cunning fingers at night over Abel's compositions, and an instrument he so highly valued.

"Gainsborough was so transported with this present that he said: 'Keep me hungry! keep me hungry! and do not send the instrument till I have finished the picture!'"

"The viol-di-gamba, however, was sent the next morning, and the same day he stretched

*A Fair  
Exchange*

*The  
Governor's  
Portrait  
begun*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

a canvas, called upon me to attend, and he soon finished the head, rubbed in the dead colouring of the full-length, painted my Newfoundland dog at my feet, and then it was put by, and no more said of it or done to it.

"After some considerable time had passed, Mrs. Thicknesse and I called one morning at his house. Mr. Gainsborough invited her up to his painting-room, saying, 'Madam, I have something above to show you.' Now, the reader will naturally conclude, as she did, that it was some further progress upon my picture, which, as it was last left, had something of the appearance (for want of light and shade in the drapery) of a drowned man ready to burst, or rather of a ragged body which had been blown about upon a gibbet on Hounslow Heath, for the dog's head and his master's were the only parts that betrayed the pencil of so great a master.

"But upon Mrs. Thicknesse's entering the room, she found it was to show her Mr. Fischer's portrait, painted at full length completely finished, in scarlet and gold, like a colonel of the Foot Guards, and mine standing in its tatter-a-rag condition by the side of it. Mrs. Thicknesse knew this picture was not to be paid for, and that it was begun and completed after mine. She would have rejoiced to have seen a hundred pictures finished before mine that were to be paid for; but she instantly burst into tears, retired, and wrote Mr. Gainsborough a note, desiring him to put my picture up in his garret, and not let

*Portrait  
of Fischer*





"The Duchess of Devonshire" (p. 140).



## Peace Patched Up

it stand to be a foil to Mr. Fischer's; he did so, and as instantly sent home the viol-di-gamba!

"Upon my meeting Mr. Gainsborough, I believe the next day, I asked him how he could have acted so very imprudently, and observed to him that it was not consistent with his usual delicacy, nor good sense, that even if he had made a foolish bargain with her, yet it was a bargain and ought to be fulfilled, for I must own that had he been a man I loved less, I, too, should have been a little offended. Now, reason and good sense had returned to my friend.

" 'I own,' said he, 'I was very wrong not only in doing as I did, but I have been guilty of a shameful indelicacy in accepting the instrument which Mrs. Thicknesse's fingers from a child had been accustomed to, but my admiration of it shut out my judgment, and I had long since determined to send it her back with the picture, and so I told Mr. Palmer' (and so he did), adding, 'Pray, make peace with Mrs. Thicknesse, and tell her I will finish her picture in my very best manner, and send it her home forthwith.'

*The  
Painter's  
Apology*

"A few days after we three met, and they shook hands, and seemed as good friends as ever; but days, weeks, and months passed, and no picture appearing, either at his house or mine, I began to think it then became my turn to be a little angry, for I suspected, and I suspected right, that he had determined never to touch it more; and so I wrote him a letter and told him so, adding, that Mrs. Thicknesse was certainly entitled to

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

the picture either from his justice or his generosity—that I would not give a farthing for it, as a mark of his justice, but if he would send it to me from his generosity unfinished as it was, I should feel myself obliged to him; and he sent it as it was!

“Nothing but knowing the goodness of his heart, the generosity of his temper, and the peculiarities of his mind, could have made me even speak to him again,

*Taken at* after having given me so deadly a blow, for  
*his Word* it was a deadly one; but I knew though it seemed his act, it did not originate with him. He had been told that I had said openly in a public coffee-house at Bath, that when I first knew him at Ipswich, his children were running about the streets there without shoes or stockings; but the rascal who told him so was the villain who robbed the poor from the plate he held at the church door for alms! That Mr. Gainsborough did not believe me capable of telling so gross a falsehood I have his authority to pronounce, for he told me what he said in return.

“‘I acknowledge,’ said he, ‘I owe many obligations to Mr. Thicknesse, and I know not any man from whom I could receive acts of friendship with more pleasure,’ and then made this just remark—‘I suppose,’ said he, ‘the Doctor knew I now and then made you a present of a drawing, and he meanly thought, by setting us at variance, he might come in for one himself.’

“The first time I met Mr. Gainsborough after he had presented me with my own unfinished picture, I saw that concern and shame in his face which good sense,

## A Scarecrow

an upright heart, and conscious errors always discover. I did not lament the loss of his finishing strokes to my portrait, but grieved that it had ever been begun; he desired I would not let any other painter touch it, and I solemnly assured him it should never be touched; it had I said, been touched enough and so had I, and then the subject dropt; but every time I went into the room where that scarecrow hung, it gave me so painful a sensation, that I protest it often turned me sick, and in one of those sick fits, I desired Mrs. Thicknesse would return the picture to Mr. Gainsborough, and that as she had set her heart on having my full-length portrait, I would rather give Mr. Pine his fifty guineas for painting it, than be so daily reminded and sickened at the sight of such a glaring disregard from a man I so much admired, and so affectionately esteemed.

*The  
Governor  
Offended*

“This she consented to do, provided I would permit her to send with it a card expressing her sentiments at the same time, to which I am sorry to say I too hastily consented. In that card she bid him take his brush, and first rub out the countenance of the truest and warmest friend he ever had, and so done, then blot him for ever from his memory.”

According to Allan Cunningham, Gainsborough slipped a hundred guineas into Mrs. Thicknesse's hand in payment for the instrument. That statement, he says, was made to him by a member of the Gainsborough family.

*The Viol  
Paid for*



## CHAPTER VII.

### GAINSBOROUGH AS LETTER-WRITER.

The great letter-writers — Gainsborough's merits — David Garrick — The Shakespeare portrait — Ill, and better — Jackson of Exeter — History pictures — Painter to musician — The advice of a serious fellow — The horse and his rider — Encouragement to a would-be painter — On composition — A visit to Lord Shelborne's — Thomas Dunning, Lord Ashburton — An easy way with critics — Sick of *Haut Ton* — Growing dauntless — After Bach — Abuse of franking.

In the eighteenth century the art of letter-writing was brought almost to perfection. The advance in the epistolary style from the Elizabethans to the early Georgians is very remarkable, and was no doubt due mainly to the influence of the nervous and rhythmic diction of Dryden, the "Father of English Prose." If Gainsborough cannot, with Walpole, Lady Wortley Montagu, William Cowper, and others of his illustrious contemporaries, be placed in the front rank of letter-writers, his correspondence nevertheless was characterised by the improved literary taste of his age. He wrote, of course, quite unconsciously of his possession of any literary faculty, and evidently never dreamt that

## Penmanship

his letters would ever see the light of publicity. His style however is fluent, natural, chatty, and seasoned with a sense of humour. He wrote a beautiful hand, and was free from the affectation of signing his name so that nobody could read it—a fantastic weakness characteristic of some men of genius and of all who imagine themselves to be geniuses.

*Gains-  
borough's  
Merits*

Unfortunately he was as neglectful about dating his letters as he was about signing and dating his pictures. Only a few of his letters have been preserved, but these, especially those which he wrote to his friends Garrick and Jackson, and to his sister, Mrs. Gibbon, are extremely interesting, and give us a clear insight into the versatility and generosity of his character. He scorned conventionalities, excepting the habit of occasionally using coarse language, which was the practice even of polite society in his day.

For Garrick Gainsborough had profound admiration. In a letter to Henderson, a young actor whose acquaintance he made at Bath, Gainsborough wrote in 1773:—"Garrick is the greatest creature living, in every respect: he is worth studying in every action. Every view and every idea of him is worthy of being stored up for imitation; and I have ever found him a generous and sincere friend. Look upon him, Henderson, with your imitative eyes, for when he drops you'll have nothing but poor old Nature's book to look in."

*David  
Garrick*

In another letter to Henderson, he says: "In all but

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

eating, stick to Garrick; in that let him stick to you, for I'll be curst if you are not his master. Never mind the fools who talk of imitation and copying. All is imitation, and if you quit that natural likeness to Garrick which your mother bestowed upon you, you'll be flung. Ask Garrick else.

"Why, sir, what makes the difference between man and man is real performance and not genius or conception. There are a thousand Garricks, a thousand Giardinis and Fischers, and Abels. Why only one Garrick, with Garrick's eyes, voice, etc., etc., etc.? One Giardini with Giardini's fingers, etc., etc.? But one Fischer, with Fischer's dexterity, quickness, etc.? Or more than one Abel with Abel's feeling upon the instrument? All the rest of the world are mere *hearers* and *see'rs*.

"Now, as I said in my last, as Nature seems to have intended the same thing in you as in Garrick, no matter how short or how long, her kind intention must not be crossed. If it is, she will tip the wink to Madam Fortune and you'll be kicked downstairs. Think on that, Master Ford. God bless you."

In justice to the memory of poor Henderson, it must not be thought from the reference to his powers of digestion in this letter that he was an exceptional guzzler. It was fashionable to be a gourmand in those days, and gastronomy was cultivated as a fine art. Even Handel, it is said, while he was enjoying the hospitality of Lord Burlington, practised this art with

## Damping Genius

considerable skill, and Queen Caroline herself boasted her proficiency in it.

Garrick, as I have mentioned in a former chapter, suggested to Gainsborough that he should paint an ideal portrait of Shakespeare. The following letter to the actor, referring to the subject, is especially interesting, as it reveals to us the difficulty which Gainsborough experienced in trying to paint from imagination.

*The  
Shake-  
speare  
Portrait*

His letter is dated Bath, 22nd August 1772, and has already been quoted in another connection (p. 73):—

“I doubt I stand accused (if not accursed) all this time for my neglect in not going to Stratford, and giving you a line thence as I promised; but what can one do such weather as this—continual rainy? My genius is so damped by it, that I can do nothing to please me. I have been several days rubbing in and rubbing out my design of Shakespeare, and hang me! if I shall let it go or let you see it at last. I was willing, like an ass that I am, to expose myself a little out of the simple portrait way, and had an idea of showing where that inimitable poet had his ideas from, by an immediate ray darting down upon his eye turned up for the purpose; but confound me, I can make nothing of my ideas, there has been such a fall of rain from the same quarter. You shall not see it, for I will cut it before you can come. Tell me, dear sir, when you propose coming to Bath, that I may be quick enough in my motions. Shakespeare’s bust is a silly smiling thing, and I have not sense enough to make him more sensible



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

in the picture, and so I tell ye, you shall not see it. I must make a plain picture of him standing erect, and give it an old look as if it had been painted at the time he lived; and there we shall fling 'em."

On recovering from a serious illness, for which the then fashionable remedy of bleeding had been prescribed, Gainsborough wrote to Garrick, in 1768:—

"I take particular notice of your friendly anxiety for my recovery, and thank you most kindly for your sharp thought; but having had twelve ounces of *Ill, and* blood taken immediately away, am perfectly *Better* recovered—strong in the back and *able*; so make your sublime self easy. I suppose your letter to Mr. Sharp was upon no other business, so have enclosed it; but observe I thank you sincerely. Shakespeare shall come forth forthwith, as the lawyer says. *Damn* the original picture of him, *with your leave*, for I think a stupider face I never beheld except D——k's. I intend, with your approbation, my dear friend, to take the form from his pictures and statues, just enough to preserve the likeness *past the doubt of all blockheads* at first sight, and supply a *soul* from his works. It is impossible that such a mind and ray of heaven could shine with such a face and pair of eyes as that picture has; so, as I said before, damn that.

"I am going to dinner, and after I will try a sketch. I shall leave the *price* to you; I do not care whether I have a farthing if you will but let me do it; to be sure, I should never ask more than my portrait price (which





"Mrs. Siddons" (p. 245).



## Singing at Sight

is sixty guineas), but perhaps ought to ask less, as there is no confinement of painting from life; but, I say, I leave it to you, promising to be contented *upon honour*. I could wish you to call *upon any pretence*, any day after next Wednesday, at the Duke of Montagu's, because you would see the Duke and Duchess in my *last* manner; but not as if you thought anything of mine worth that trouble—only to see his Grace's landscape of Rubens and the four Van Dycks, whole-length, in his Grace's dressing-room."

On the 27th of July, 1768, Gainsborough again communicated with "Davy," saying:—

"I, as well as the rest of the world, acknowledge your riches, and know your princely spirit; but all will not do, for, as I told you before, I am already overpaid for that shabby performance; and if you have a mind to make me happier than all the presents London can afford, you must do it by never thinking yourself in my debt. I wished many years for the happiness of Mr. Garrick's acquaintance, and pray, dear sir, let me now enjoy it quietly; for, sincerely and truly, I shall not be easy if you give way to any of your romantic whimsies; besides, d——n it, I thought you knew me too well, you who can read hearts and faces both at a view, and that at first sight too.

"Come, if you will not plague me any more upon this frightful subject, I will tell you a story about *first sight*. You must know, sir, whilst I lived at Ipswich, there was a benefit concert, in which a new song was to be introduced, and I, being steward, went to the

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

honest cabinet-maker, who was our singer instead of a better, and asked him if he could sing at sight, for that I had a new song with all the parts wrote out. 'Yes, sir,' said he, 'I can.' Upon which I ordered Mr. Giardini, of Ipswich, to begin the symphony, and gave my signal for the attention of the company; but, behold! a dead silence followed the symphony instead of the song, upon which I jumped up to the fellow: 'D——n you! why don't you sing? Did not you tell me you could sing at sight?' 'Yes, please your honour, I did say I could sing at sight, but not at *first sight*.'"

Jackson, with whom Gainsborough frequently corresponded, and for whose talents he formed a somewhat exaggerated estimate, was a musician by profession, but followed art as a recreation. He is remembered by his *Te Deum*, but his volume of letters is almost forgotten. Like Garrick, Jackson seems to have thought that Gainsborough's genius was not having full scope in portraiture and landscape-painting. He therefore suggested to Gainsborough that he should paint a great historical subject. The following letters are in reply to the suggestion:—

"I admire your notions of most things, and do agree with you that there might be exceeding pretty pictures painted of the kind you mention. But are you sure you do not mean instead of the 'Flight into Egypt,' my 'Flight out of Bath'? Do you consider, my dear maggotty sir, what a deal of work history pictures require to what little dirty

## Art of Composition

subjects of coal-horses and jackasses and such figures as I fill up with? No, you don't consider anything about that part of the story; you design faster than any man or any thousand men could execute. There is but one 'Flight' I should like to paint, and that's yours out of Exeter; for while your numerous and polite acquaintances encourage you to talk so cleverly, we shall have but few productions—real and substantial productions. But to be serious (as I know you love to be), do you really think that a regular composition in the landskip way should ever be filled with history, or any figures but such as fill a place (I won't say stop a gap) or create a little business, for the eye to be drawn from the trees in order to return to them with more glee? I did not know you admired those tragi-comic pictures, because some have thought that a regular history picture may have too much background, and the composition be hurt by not considering what ought to be principal. But I talk now like old Square-toes. Adieu!"

By such pleasant banter Gainsborough gave his well-meaning friend a plain enough intimation that he was the best judge of his powers, and that no one was more conscious of his limitations than he was himself. The fool rushing in where angels fear to tread could not have been more effectually silenced, if the painter had stormed and fumed with righteous wrath.

Gainsborough recurs to the subject again, but only as a peg upon which to proffer some advice to a friend for whom he cherished a tender solicitude.



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

Gainsborough probably cared no more for history than Scott cared for Art. Both well understood their own limitations. Within those limitations both were supreme. In another undated letter to Jackson, Gainsborough returns to the subject of history painting, and adds a warning to his correspondent about having transactions with connoisseurs :—

“ I shall not tease you upon the subject of the ‘*Flight*,’ as we are now upon a *better*, and that which above all others I have long wished to touch upon; *Painter to* because tho’ I’m a rogue in talking upon *Musician* Painting, and love to *seem* to take things wrong, I can be both serious and honest upon any subjects thoroughly pleasing to me; and such will ever be those wherein your happiness and our friendship are concerned. Let me, then, throw aside that d——d *grinning trick* of mine for a moment, and be as serious and stupid as a horse. Mark then, that ever since I have been quite clear on your being a real genius, so long have I been of opinion that you are daily throwing away your gift upon *Gentlemen*, and only studying how you shall become the *Gentleman* too. Now, d——n gentlemen, there is not such a set of enemies to a real artist in the world as they are if not kept at a proper distance.

“ They think (and so may you for a while) that they reward your merit by their company and notice; but I, who blow away all the chaff—and, by G——, in their eyes, too, if they don’t stand clear—know that they have but one part worth looking at, and that is their

## Way of "Gentlemen"

Purse; their Hearts are seldom near enough the right place to get a sight of it. If any gentlemen come to my house, my man asks them if they want me (provided they don't seem satisfied with seeing the pictures), and then he asks what they would please to want with me; if they say a picture, 'Sir, please to walk this way, and my master will speak to you'; but if they only want me to bow and compliment, 'Sir, my master is walk'd out'—and so, my dear, there I nick them. Now if a *Lady*, a handsome Lady, comes, 'tis as much as his life is worth to send her away so."

By "gentlemen" Gainsborough no doubt meant the connoisseurs and picture-dealers. It was natural that he should have a profound contempt for them, as they could not appreciate the fine landscapes with which he covered his walls. He thought Jackson capable of something better than mere amateur work in art, and feared that he was going to content himself with becoming a connoisseur. In the following letter, dated September 14th, but yearless, he again cautions him on the subject:—

"Now you seem to lay too much stress upon me, and show yourself to be a serious fellow. I question, if you could splice all my letters together, whether you would find more connection and sense in them than in many landships joined, where half a tree was to meet half a church to make a principal object. I should not think of my pretending to reproach you, who are a regular system of philosophy, a reasonable

*The  
Advice of  
a Serious  
Fellow*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

creature, and a particular fellow. If I meant anything (which God knows if I did) it was this: that many a real genius is lost in the fictitious character of a gentleman; and that as many of those creatures are continually courting you, possibly you might forget what I, without any merit to myself, remember from mere shyness—namely, that they make no part of the artist. Depend upon it, Jackson, you have more sense in your little finger than I have in my whole body and head; I am the most inconsistent, changeable being, so full of fits and starts, that if you mind what I say it will be shutting your eyes to some purpose. I am only sensible of meaning, and of having once said, that I wished you lived nearer to me; but tha this wish does not proceed from a selfishness rather than any desire of correcting any step of yours, I much doubt. I might add, perhaps, in my red-hot way that, damme, Exeter is no more a place for a Jackson than Sudbury in Suffolk is for a G.!"

The Mr. Palmer referred to in the following letter to Jackson was the lessee of the Bath Theatre. The P.S. to the letter shows that Gainsborough thought lightly of taking an occasional journey from Bath to London, notwithstanding the supposed perils of the road in those days:—

"Is it true that you broke your neck in going home? I have not seen Palmer, but only the day after your departure to learn the truth. It is a current report here that the great and the amiable Mr. Jackson got a mischief in going home, that you had tied your horse

## Terrible Catastrophe

by the head so fast that his head was dragged off in going down a hill, and that you ordered the driver (like a near-sighted man) to go back for the horse's body, and that the chaise horses, *The Horse and his Rider* frightened at the sight of the boy's riding up upon a horse without a head, took fright and made for Exeter. And that you, unwilling to leave your horse in that condition, took a flying leap out of the window and pitched head-foremost into a hollow tree. Miss D—I have heard this story, and says if it be true she'll never touch a note again. I hope to hear from either Palmer or Bearing, when I see them, some more favourable account of you. I'm but little disposed to pity you, because you slipped away so d——d sly, without giving me any more time than you had to jump into the hollow tree. Pray, if your d——d long fingers escaped let's hear from you soon, and in the meantime I'll pray that it's all a lie.

“P.S.—Will you meet me at London any time, and I'll order business accordingly?”

His attachment to Jackson and desire that he should do justice to himself are brought out in the following characteristic letter:—

“I will confess to you that I think it unpardonable in me not to speak seriously upon a subject of so much consequence as that which has employed us of late; therefore you shall have my thoughts without any humming [or hah-ing], swearing, or affectation of wit. Indeed, my affection for you would naturally have led me that way before now, but that I am soon lost if I



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

pretend to reasoning; and you being all regularity and judgment, I own provoke me the more to break loose, as he who cannot be correct is apt to direct the eye with a little freedom of handling; but no more of it. I must own your calculations and comparison betwixt our different professions to be just, provided you remember that in mine a man may do great things and starve in a garret if he does not conquer his passions and conform to the common eye in chusing that branch which they will encourage and pay for.

*Encouragement to a Would-be Painter*

“Now there cannot be that difference between music and painting, unless you suppose that the musician voluntarily shuns the only popular branch, and will be a chamber counsel when he might appear at the bar. You see, sir, I’m out of my subject already. But now in again. If music will not satisfy you without a certainty (which, by-the-bye, is nonsense, begging your pardon, for there is no such thing in any profession), then I say, be a painter. You have more of the painter than half those who get money by it, that I will swear, if you desire it, upon a church Bible. You want a little drawing and the use of the pencil and colours, which I could put into your hand in one month without meddling with your head; I propose to let that alone if you’ll let mine off easy. There is a branch of Painting next in profit to portrait, and quite [within] your power without any more drawing than I’ll answer for your having, which is Drapery and Landskip backgrounds. Perhaps you don’t know that whilst a face painter is harassed





"Mrs. Robinson" (p. 146).



## Profits in Drapery

to death, the drapery painter sits and earns five or six hundred a year, and laughs all the while. Your next will be to tell me what I know as well as yourself—namely, that I am an impertinent coxcomb. This I know, and will speak out if you kill me for it; you are too modest, too diffident, too sensible, and too honest ever to push in music."

Jackson, it appears, interested himself about Gainsborough's painting materials, and in another letter Gainsborough writes to him:—"Your indigo is clear like your understanding and pure as your music, not to say exactly of the same blue as that heaven from which your ideas are reflected. To say the truth *On Com-*  
of your indigo, 'tis delightful, so look sharp *position*  
for some more (I'll send you a drawing), and for your thoughts I have often flattered myself I was just going to think so. The lugging in objects, whether agreeable to the whole or not, is a sign of the least genius of anything, for a person able to collect in the mind will certainly group in the mind also; and if he cannot master a number of objects so as to introduce them in friendship, let him do but a few, and that you know, my Boy, makes simplicity. One part of a picture ought to be like the first part of a tune, and so I'm done."

Gainsborough did not care, as I have said, for the society of aristocrats, though it is clear from the following letter to Jackson that his company was courted by distinguished noblemen, and that he sometimes accepted invitations to their houses if there was

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

a chance of meeting interesting people:—"I should have wrote to you sooner, but have been strangely hurried since I left Exeter. On my way home I met with Lord Shelborne, who insisted on my making him a short visit, and I don't repent going (though I generally do to all lords' houses), as I met with Mr. Dunning there. There is something, exclusive of the clear and deep understanding of that gentleman, most exceedingly pleasing to me. He seems the only man who talks as Giardini plays, if you know what I mean. He puts no more motion than what goes to the real performance, which constitutes that ease and gentility peculiar to damned clever fellows, each in their way. I observe his forehead jets out, and mine runs back a good deal more than common, which accounts for some difference betwixt our parts."

Mr. Dunning was a famous advocate of Gainsborough's day who became Lord Ashburton. He was not, however, famous for his good looks, as the following story, told by the author of *Thomas Dunning, Lord Ashburton Gossip of the Century*, shows. One night he was at Nando's coffee-house playing at whist, Horne Tooke being of the party. Thurlow, who had a communication to make to him, called at the house and asked the waiter to give him a note.

"How shall I know Mr. Dunning, sir?" said the man.

"There's no difficulty about *that*," answered Thur-

## Devonshire Men.

low. "All you have to do is to take it up and give it to the ugliest man in the room. You'll find him there with a face like the knave of clubs."

That Gainsborough, however, did not share the common view about Dunning's personal appearance is evident from the following extract from the letter already quoted:—

"He is an amazing compact man in every respect, and, as we get a sight of everything by comparison, only think of the difference betwixt Mr. Dunning, almost motionless with a mind brandishing like lightning from corner to corner of the earth, whilst a long cross-made fellow only flings his arms about like threshing flails, without half an idea of what he would be at; and besides this neatness in outward appearance, his store-room seems cleared of all French ornaments and gingerbread work, everything is simplicity and elegance and in its proper place; no disorder or confusion in the furniture, as if he were going to remove. Sober sense and great acuteness are marked very strong in his face, but if those were all I should only admire him as a great lawyer, but there is genius (in our sense of the word) shines in all he says. In short, Mr. Jackson of Exeter, I begin to think there is something in the air of Devonshire that grows clever fellows.<sup>1</sup> I could name four or five of

<sup>1</sup> Is this a kindly reference to his old master, Hayman, and to Reynolds, who were both Devonshire men? That it was also a compliment to his Exeter correspondent and Lord Shelborne is, of course, self-evident.



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

you superior to the product of any other county in England.

"Pray make my compliments to one lady who is neat about the mouth, if you can guess, and believe me most faithfully yours,

"THO. GAINSBOROUGH."

Dunning was counsel for Macklin, the famous tragedian, who acted Shylock in his hundredth year. Macklin brought an action for slander in the King's Bench, and at the conclusion of the trial, which went in his favour, the Judge, Lord Mansfield, congratulated him, saying: "You are a great actor, but you never in your life acted more superbly than you have to-day." Dunning took no fee for his services on this occasion.

Jackson was in London at the time of the 1768 Exhibition of the Incorporated Society of Artists, and the following letter, already quoted, proves that he criticised Gainsborough's contributions to the show without much effect:—

"I will suppose all you say about my exhibition Pictures to be true, because I have not time to dispute it with you. I am much obliged to you, and wish I could spend a few days with you in town, but I have begun a large picture of Tommy Linley and his sister, and cannot come. I suppose you know the boy is bound for Italy the first opportunity. Pray, do you remember carrying me to a picture-dealer's somewhere by Hanover Square, and my being struck with the leaving and touch

*An Easy  
Way with  
Critics*

## Fit of the Blues

of a little bit of tree; the whole picture was not above eight or ten inches high, and about a foot long. I wish, if you had time, you would inquire what it might be purchased for, and give me one line more whilst you stay in town.

"If you can come this way home, one may enjoy a day or two of your company. I shall be heartily glad. I can always make up one bed for a friend without any trouble, and nobody has a better claim to that title, or a better title to that claim, than yourself.

"Believe me, dear Jackson,

"Yours most sincerely,

"THO. GAINSBOROUGH.

"*May 11th, 1768.*

"My compliments attend all inquiring friends, and damn this pen."

That Gainsborough, with all his liveliness, had occasional fits of depression, is evident from the following:—

"MY DEAR JACKSON,—I am much obliged to you for your last letter, and the lessons received before. I think I now begin to see a little into the modulation and the introduction of flats and sharps, and when we meet you shall hear me play *Sick of*  
*Haut*  
*Ton*  
*extempore*. . . . I'm sick of Portraits and wish very much to take my viol-da-gam and walk off to some sweet village where I can paint landskips and enjoy the fag-end of life in quietness and ease. But these fine ladies and their tea-drinkings, dancings,

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

husband-huntings, etc., etc., etc., will fob me out of the last ten years, and I fear miss getting husbands, too. But we can say nothing of these things, you know, Jackson; we must jogg on and be content with the jingling of the bells, only, d——n it, I hate a dust, the kicking up a dust, and being confined in harness to follow the track whilst others ride in the waggon, under cover, stretching their legs in the straw at ease, and gazing at green trees and blue skies without half my taste. That's d——d hard. My comfort is I have five violoda-gamba, three Jayes, and two Barak-Normans.

“Adieu, etc.,

“THO. GAINSBOROUGH.

“BATH, *June 4th.*”

Gainsborough's own fears that he might be overdoing that lightness and disregard for rules of which Reynolds spoke are brought out in the following:—

“But don't be in a hurry to determine anything about me; if you are, ten to one you are wrong, those who can claim a longer acquaintance with me than Mr. Jackson knowing at this moment but very little of my real temper. I'm heartily sorry that you don't come to reside near Bath, as you expected, not because you are disappointed of the advantage of conversing with me and my books, but because I am deprived of the much greater advantages of sucking your sensible skull and of the opportunity I might possibly have of convincing you how

## Way of the Plodder

much I shall always esteem your various and extensive talents, not to mention what I think still better worth mentioning—namely, your honesty and undesigning plainness and openness of soul. They say your mind is not *worldly*; ‘No,’ said I, ‘because it’s *heavenly*.’ . . . I grow dauntless out of mere stupidity as I grow old, and I believe that any one who plods on in any one way, especially if that one way will bring him bread and cheese as well as a better, will grow the same. Thanks for the indigo—a little of it goes a great way, which is lucky.—Adieu.”

The correspondence with Jackson was kept up after Gainsborough removed to London, but the following is the only letter written from Schomberg House that has been preserved:—

“*Jan. 25th, 1777.*

“DEAR JACKSON,—I suppose I never drew a portrait half so like the sitter as my silence since the receipt of your last resembles neglect and ingratitude, owing to two of the crossest accidents that ever attended a poor fiddler. First and most unfortunately, I have been four times after Bach, and have never laid eyes on him; and secondly and most provokingly, I have had a parcel made up of two drawings and a box of pencils, such as you wrote for, ever since the day after I received your favour enclosing the *Tenths*, and directed for you to go by the Exeter coach, which has laid in my room by the neglect of two blockheads, one my nephew, who is too proud to carry a bundle under his arm, though his

*After  
Bach*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

betters, the journeyman tailors, always carry their foul shirts so; and my d——d cowardly footman who, forsooth! is afraid to peep into the street for fear of being pressed for sea-service, the only service God Almighty made him for, so that, my dear Jackson, if it was not for your being endowed with Job's patience, I should think myself for ever deservedly shut out of your favour; but surely I shall catch Bach soon to get you an answer to your letter.

"You hear, I suppose, that all Lords and Members have given up their privilege of franking to ease the Taxes? I'm sorry for it."

Gainsborough must have been mistaken here. Members of Parliament in his day may have talked about abandoning their franking privilege, or may actually have modified some of its abuses, but it was not until the introduction of the penny postage in 1840 that franking was abolished. In a note to one of Sir Walter Scott's letters to Lady Abercorn, *Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott* (vol. i. p. 91), there is an account of the way in which the privilege was abused. Not only members of both Houses of Parliament, but Government officials and other public functionaries and their friends were allowed to send or receive daily letters and parcels post free. The postal charges were then so high that they were evaded on all hands, and the privilege of franking was much abused in favour of private friends, literary men, and even mercantile houses. Dr. Lardner stated before a Committee that





"The Hon. Mrs. Graham" (o. 146).



## Official Franks

his correspondence with reference to his various publications, and to engineering matters on which he was consulted, was carried on principally by official franks. The number of franked missives was about seven millions yearly, and as official franks carried any weight, bundles of letters for the same neighbourhood were often enclosed in them; and it was calculated that in 1838 a single mail coach, out of the two dozen leaving London each night, could have carried all the chargeable letters. Probably, through the influence of his friend Sheridan, Gainsborough was able to take full advantage of the franking system.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### LONDON.

Back in London—The triumph of the Commoner—The hour and the man—Schomberg House—"Diana and Actæon"—Original member of the R.A.—Louthembourg—The Artist's peep-show—Insolence rebuked—Relations with the Academy—Coolness with Reynolds—Plenty of patrons—Favoured by the King—Quarrel with the Academy—A famous collection—The missing Gainsborough—History of "The Duchess"—Stolen!—Doubts and controversies—Duchess Georgiana—Expression and its troubles—The Facial angle—Mrs. Siddons—Mrs. Sheridan and her sister—Perdita—"The Hon. Mrs. Graham"—"Lady Mulgrave"—Rapidity of execution—His breadth.

GAINSBOROUGH, with his wife, his two daughters, and his nephew and pupil, Gainsborough Dupont, removed to London in 1774. He found it very different *Back in* from the London of 1742. During the *London* thirty-two years that had elapsed since as a lad he took up his quarters in the neighbourhood of St. Martin's Lane, revolutionary changes had taken place in the history of the British Empire and its Capital. Walpole's star had set and Pitt's had arisen. The "Great Commoner" had retrieved the disasters of the war with France and Spain—a war to which Walpole, yielding to popular clamour, had unwillingly

## Pitt's Policy

and unjustly consented. That war resulted in the loss of Minorca, then considered the key to the Mediterranean. Admiral Byng, against the protest of Pitt, had been shot for failing to relieve it.

The disaster, however, had now been well-nigh forgotten in the popular excitement over the successful policy by which Pitt

*The  
Triumph  
of the  
Commoner*

had added vast territories to the British Crown both in the Old World and the New. The victory of Wolfe over the French under Montcalm at Quebec had settled the question as to whether French or British influence was to dominate over the vast region stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the mighty St. Lawrence, Niagara, and the Great Lakes to the Arctic regions. The brilliant successes of Clive in India had equally settled the question as to which of the same two rival nations should "hold the gorgeous East in fee" from the Himalaya to Cape Comorin. These triumphs, not yet sullied by the criminal folly which lost the great colonies of North America, had powerfully appealed to the imagination and the spirit of enterprise of the British people, enormously increased the prestige, the wealth, and population of the metropolis, and made Pitt the idol of the nation.

Gainsborough could not have settled in London at a more opportune moment. Never before had there been so great a demand as existed for portraits by the best artists, and Gainsborough soon discovered that he had no other serious rivals than Reynolds and Romney, unless

*The Hour  
and the  
Man*



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

it was John Russell, the brilliant crayonist and Methodist enthusiast.

After a temporary sojourn in North Oxford Street, Gainsborough took up his abode at Schomberg House in Pall Mall. Built at the time of the Commonwealth, this mansion was tenanted by an official of the Merry Monarch's court before it was occupied by a son of Dutch William's General, after whom it was named. When the house left his family it had a variety of owners, and experienced several vicissitudes of fortune. The Duke of Cumberland, the Butcher of Culloden, lived in it for a while, and during the Gordon Riots it was threatened with sack and pillage. John Astley, painter and beau, occupied it and divided it into three houses, building a large studio on the roof, overlooking St. James's Park. On his death Cosway, the miniaturist, acquired it. Gainsborough occupied the west wing. Towards the close of the eighteenth century it was often utilised as a picture gallery, and part of it was tenanted by Thomas Payne, the bookseller. In 1850, or thereabouts, the eastern wing was demolished and rebuilt for the War Office. Another tenant of a part of Schomberg House at the time of Gainsborough's arrival there was Dr. Graham, described as "quack, enthusiast and lunatic, of earth-baths, temple of health, and celestial-bed fame." His principal show lady, a kind of high priestess of Dr. Graham's peculiar hygienic system, was Emma Lyon, *alias* Hart, a woman of remarkable beauty, said to have been the lady who, as Lady Hamilton, has been

## Treatment of the Nude

immortalised by Romney. Sir Walter Armstrong thinks she sat as Gainsborough's model for his "Musidora" while still an inmate of Dr. Graham's establishment.

Sir Walter and Mr. E. T. Cook are both in error in stating that "Musidora" was Gainsborough's only attempt at the nude. At Windsor Castle there is a remarkable picture: "*Diana and her Nymphs surprised by Actæon.*" The goddess and her nymphs, who are bathing, are all beautiful forms, and all nude—nude as Milton's Eve, and as daintily treated. The picture is not finished, but is far enough advanced to increase our wonder at Gainsborough's resourcefulness. True poet that he was, he never degraded woman. He has done more, perhaps, than any other painter of the British school to help us reverence her. If we substitute Gainsborough for "He" in Browning's dialogue between "The Lady and The Painter," we can understand what his views were on the artistic treatment of the nude:—

*"She.* Yet womanhood you reverence

So you profess!

*He.* With heart and soul.

*She.* Of which fact this is evidence!

To help Art-study—for some dole

Of certain wretched shillings—you

Induce a woman—virgin too—

To strip and stand stark-naked?

*He.*

True.

*She.* Nor feel you so degrade her?

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

- He.* What  
—(Excuse the interruption)—clings  
Half-savage-like around your hat?
- She.* Ah, do they please you? Wild-bird wings.  
Next season—Paris prints assert—  
We must go feathered to the skirt:  
My modiste keeps on the alert.  
Owls, hawks, jays—swallows most approve. . . .
- He.* Dare I speak plainly?
- She.* Oh, I trust!
- He.* Then, Lady Blanche, it less would move  
In heart and soul of me disgust  
Did you strip off those spoils you wear,  
And stand—for thanks, not shillings—bare,  
To help art like my model there.  
*She* well knew what absolved her—praise  
In me for God's surpassing good,  
Who granted to my reverent gaze  
A type of purest womanhood.  
*You*—clothed with murder of His best  
Of harmless beings—stand the test!  
What is it *you* know?
- She.* That you jest!"

Gainsborough's studio and rooms, for which he paid a rent of £300 a year, remain much as he left them. Here he painted some of his most famous pictures and gathered round him his musical and theatrical friends.

His fame had reached London long before he removed from Bath, for he had shown many of his pictures at the exhibitions both of the Society of Artists, of which his friend Kirby was President, and of the Royal Academy, which superseded that Society

## R.A.

in 1768. His title to a place in the front rank of his profession had been acknowledged by his election amongst the first batch of the Royal Academicians, a distinction for which he did not seem to care much, though it carried with it the right by royal patent to take the title of "Esquire," which in those days had not been appropriated by everybody. In 1772 he sent as many as fifteen pictures to the Royal Academy Exhibition, but in the year of his removal to London he did not exhibit at all. Moving his pictures and chattels from Bath, notwithstanding the good offices of his friend the carrier, Wiltshire, had evidently been a serious business. He afterwards exhibited from time to time until his final breach with his fellow-Academicians in 1784.

*Original  
Member of  
the R.A.*

One of the London artists with whom Gainsborough struck up an acquaintance, and whose portrait he painted, was Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740-1812), who, though a Royal Academician, seems to have been more successful as an amateur showman than as a professional painter. He entertained his friends with an ingenious kind of peep-show of his own invention, to which he gave the name of "Eidophusikon." It consisted of a number of pieces of glass painted with scenery representing typical British landscapes magnified by being lighted up from behind. Gainsborough, with his family instinct for ingenuity, was delighted with it, and night after night went to see it.

*Louther-  
bourg*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

More than one camera of the kind existed. The Eidophusikon was due to Louthembourg, who, though bred amid the romantic Pyrenees, was an admirer of English scenery, and said that for the truly grand in Nature no artist need travel out of the British Isles. His invention, used at Drury Lane, showed a series of moving pictures, representing British scenes. This so enchanted Gainsborough that, with the ingenuity characteristic of his family, he produced a "show-box" of his own. For this he painted a number of panes of glass, which, when lighted from behind by means of candles and viewed in front through a magnifying-lens, gave wonderful effects. Moonlights seem to have been especially enchanting. This "show-box" exhibition absorbed much of Gainsborough's time, and the Eidophusikon of Louthembourg charmed even Reynolds. It is possible that Turner, studying certain of its effects at a later date, may have been influenced by its magical lights; while Gainsborough's "show-box" may be similarly responsible for the stronger contrasts which appear in some of his works.

Of the many callers at Schomberg House, all were not rightly impressed with the great artist's genius and fame. Certain aristocratic snobs of that day regarded painters, musicians, and actors as unfit to come "betwixt the wind and their nobility." One day a noble lord who had condescended to sit to Gainsborough for his portrait called at Schomberg House and demanded of the hall porter whether

*Insolence  
Rebuked*





"Mrs. Sheridan and Mrs. Tickell" (p. 146).



## Dealings with Reynolds

"that fellow Gainsborough" had finished the picture. The artist overheard his lordship's insolence, but kept silent till he had expressed his admiration of the portrait. Gainsborough then drew his brush across the mouth, and asked, "Who is that fellow now?"

Gainsborough has been censured for his attitude towards the Royal Academy, and his coolness towards its first President, Sir Joshua Reynolds. It should be remembered, however, that Gainsborough was not singular in his aloofness towards the Academy. Romney quarrelled with the President, and never became an Academician, and never exhibited at the Academy's annual show. Moreover, Reynolds himself finally quarrelled with his colleagues and left them.

*Relations  
with the  
Academy*

It is said that Gainsborough was discourteous to Sir Joshua, who called at Schomberg House shortly after his great rival had settled there, and showed his high appreciation of Gainsborough's genius by offering to sit to him. Gainsborough, it is alleged, did not return the call, though I very much doubt the truth of the allegation, because Sir Joshua himself went again to Schomberg House, and Gainsborough accepted his offer to sit for his portrait. The picture, however, was never finished. As we have seen, there were some persons whom he felt that he could not paint, and I am inclined to think that Gainsborough, who was careless about society etiquette, was never intentionally discourteous to Reynolds, though he may have been guilty of negligence.

*Coolness  
with  
Reynolds*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

After his arrival in Pall Mall, Gainsborough was not long in attracting the fashionable world to his studio, and in sharing with Reynolds and Romney the patronage of famous men and women.

*Plenty of  
Patrons*

Sir George Beaumont, who was then chief ruler in the realms of art criticism, joined the Schomberg House circle, and became one of Gainsborough's most devoted friends. It was probably through the influence of Sir George that Gainsborough received a commission from George III. to paint the portraits of the members of the Royal Family. Mrs. Bell assures us that the artist soon became a favourite at Buckingham

*Favoured  
by the  
King*

House, and was admitted to the Palace at all hours of the day, "in spite of the then rigid Court etiquette." Hazlitt, however, in his conversations with Northcote, declares that Gainsborough did not make himself agreeable at Buckingham House "any more than Sir Joshua, who kept a certain distance, and wished to appear as a gentleman." Northcote did not contradict the statement, but rather emphasised it. Gainsborough's friend, Garrick, he said, complained that when he went to read before the Court not a look or a murmur testified approbation. "It was like reading to a set of waxwork figures: he who had been accustomed to the applause of thousands could not bear this assembly of mutes. Marchant went to the late King about a cameo, who was offended at his saying the face must be done in full and not as a profile.

## At Court

“ ‘Then,’ said the patron, ‘I’ll get somebody else to do it.’

“ Coming out at the door, one of the pages asked the artist, ‘Why do you contradict the King? He is not used to be contradicted.’

“ This is intelligible in an absolute despotism, where the will of the sovereign is law, and where he can cut off your head if he pleases; but is it not strange in a free country?”

Gainsborough probably made it a condition that he should go to the Palace at the times which best suited him. If he were such a Court favourite as Mrs. Bell makes out, it is a wonder he was not knighted. It was over the hanging of his portrait group of the “ Princess Royal and the Princesses Augusta and Elizabeth ” that Gainsborough quarrelled with the Royal Academy. He sent it with other pictures to the Exhibition at Carlton House in 1784, and asked that it might be hung in a position which he indicated, but which was not strictly in accordance with the rule for full-length portraits. The Hanging Committee, thinking it of more importance to observe the hard and fast rule than to make any concession to a man of genius, refused the request. Gainsborough was furious, and wrote:—“He begs pardon for giving them so much trouble, but he has painted the picture of the Princesses in so tender a light that, notwithstanding he approves very much of the established line for strong effects, he cannot possibly consent to have it placed higher than eight feet and a

*Quarrel  
with the  
Academy*



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

half, because the likeness and work of the picture will not be seen any higher, therefore, at a word, he will not trouble the gentlemen against their inclination, but will beg the rest of his pictures back again. This he swears by God." The Committee were unmannerly enough to send the pictures back, and Gainsborough never exhibited at the Royal Academy again.

Amongst the most famous of his pictures painted at Schomberg House were the "Baillie Group," now in the National Gallery; "Ladies in the Mall," described by Horace Walpole as "all a flutter, like a lady's fan;" the two sisters, "Mrs. Sheridan and Mrs. Tickell" (in the Dulwich Gallery); the "Duchess of Devonshire," "Lady Mulgrave," "Mrs. Siddons," "The Hon. Mrs. Graham," "Perdita," "Mrs. Moodey and her Children," "Mrs. Beaufoy," and portraits of Pitt, Fox, Sheridan, and "Colonel St. Leger standing beside his Charger," a noble piece of animal painting.

The story of the theft and recovery after many years of the famous picture of "Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire" is an art-dealing romance. It was cut out of its frame in Messrs. Agnew's Gallery one night in 1876. The thief's object in stealing it is said to have been to get money to secure the release of a comrade who was in prison in France. The prisoner, however, was set free upon a legal technicality. According to one account the thief then held his prize for a high reward, which Messrs. Agnew were willing to give, but

*The  
Missing  
Gains-  
borough*

## Restoring "the Duchess"

refused to grant immunity from punishment. Ten years later the picture was brought to New York, where it was stored in a trunk especially constructed for its reception. The trunk's later history was traced to Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago. On returning to Europe the thief was arrested at Constantinople for forgery, but escaped from prison. He was afterwards, it is said, helped by one Pat Sheedy, an American "sport," who, knowing the history of the picture, agreed to try to obtain the reward for the thief, who had once done Sheedy a good turn. For some years negotiations were carried on between this man and the American detective Pinkerton, with the result that in the spring of 1901 Mr. Agnew went to Chicago, where the picture was handed over to him. The only reward that Pat Sheedy is said to have claimed for himself was that he should have the first plate when the picture was reproduced. Mr. Pinkerton stipulated to get the second.

This was the popularly received version of the story of the recovery of the picture until Mr. Lockett Agnew denied that the restoration of the treasure to his firm was in any way due to Pat Sheedy's efforts. Mr. Agnew had reason to believe that the man on whom the authorities had their eye as being connected with the theft died three years before the picture was restored to its owners. All kinds of theories as to the theft were invented during the twenty-six years which elapsed between the disappearance of the picture and its recovery, and an indefatigable Press discovered it no

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

less than eleven times! Each discovery, however, turned out to be entirely fictitious.

"The Duchess" was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1783, the year before Gainsborough's quarrel with the Academicians. It was bought out of the Academy by Mrs. Magennis, and was afterwards sold to Mr. Bentley, the picture restorer, who sold it for £63 to Mr. Wynn Ellis. When that gentleman's collection was dispersed by Messrs. Christie, Manson & Woods, on May 6th, 1876, the "Gainsborough" was the feature of the sale, and the great price it fetched made a huge sensation. It was sold to Messrs. Agnew for £10,605—a sum which, up to that date, was the highest ever paid at Christie's for a single portrait canvas. It was afterwards shown by the purchasers in the Bond Street Galleries, where it was hung in a room by itself on the first floor fronting the street. On the night of May 25th the porter closed the premises at half-past nine, when the picture was there undisturbed. The next morning at 7.30, when the porter opened the room, it was not there. The window of the room was open. (The room was about 13 feet from the ground.) The stretcher had been taken out of the frame, and the canvas cut all round close to the stretcher.

Mr. Agnew has never doubted the genuineness of the recovered picture, although the canvas was slightly smaller than when it was stolen—some of the margin having been removed. The only other defects were two slight flaws.

*Doubts  
and Con-  
troversies*

## Beautiful Duchess

Some, however, have questioned whether it is a real "Gainsborough." Even Millais is said to have had his doubts.

"You do not love this Duchess," he said, while talking to his friends one day; "and Gainsborough's women, delightful and intellectual creatures, you want to die for them!"

Again, some controversy has arisen as to whether the picture is a portrait of the famous Georgiana. Some writers, including the author of an article on that lady in the *National Dictionary of Duchess Biography*, have asserted that it is a portrait *Georgiana* of the second Duchess, a woman of a very different character. I have the permission, however, of the Hon. F. Leveson-Gower, Duchess Georgiana's grandson, to say that the picture is certainly a portrait of his grandmother. He has in his possession an engraving taken from a replica of it, smaller. This replica was bought by Lord Dover, who married a daughter of Lady Carlisle, the daughter of the famous Duchess. She was constantly at Dover House, and must have known if the portrait was not one of her mother. It was so considered by the whole family. Mrs. Coke, Lady Dover's daughter, drew up and had printed, early in the 'sixties, a catalogue of the contents of Dover House. In it the portrait in question was named "Georgiana Duchess." She was a very charming and amiable lady with considerable talent. She was not only the patron of young authors, but herself wrote a play, the *Tragedy of Werner*. As a leader of Society



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

she had no rival, but many of the stories that have been told about her bewitching influence are untrue. She did not get votes for Fox at the famous Westminster election by allowing people to kiss her, and there is reason to believe that Northcote was mistaken when he said, "I remember once being struck with seeing the Duchess of Devonshire, the same that Sir Joshua painted, and who was a miracle of beauty when she was young, and followed by crowds wherever she went. I was coming out of Mrs. W——'s, and on the landing-place there was she, standing by herself and calling over the banister for her servant to come to her. If she had been as she once was, a thousand admirers would have flown to her assistance; but her face was painted over like a mask, and there was hardly any appearance of life left but the restless motion of her eyes. I was really hurt." She was a fond mother, beloved by her children, but she had her faults. Like other fashionable ladies of her day, she gambled a good deal. It was her misfortune, however, to be married to a man utterly unworthy of her. There is another picture of her by Gainsborough, painted when she was a child. The "Georgiana Duchess" is not the best of Gainsborough's portraits, and it bears traces of work by another hand, possibly Gainsborough Dupont's, but it is not unworthy of the master who gave us "Mrs. Siddons" and "Mrs. Sheridan," and other "delicious melodies in colour, miracles of distinction, unrivalled records of the beauty of women."

Notwithstanding the rapidity with which Gains-





"Cornard Wood" (p. 185).



## Mrs. Siddons

borough worked, he often found great difficulty in giving the right expression to certain features of his sitters. It is said that while painting the Duchess of Devonshire he once rubbed out the mouth, saying, "The Duchess is too much for me." He almost despaired of getting Mrs. Siddons's features right.

*Expression  
and its  
Troubles*

"D——n her nose," he is said to have muttered, "there's no end to it."

A long nose increases the difficulty of adjusting the features to what the anatomists call the cranio-facial angle. This is the angle made by a line drawn from the middle (the external auditory meatus) of the ear to another line from the tip of the nose to the forehead. This angle is never a right angle, but always more or less acute. Gainsborough, though he has been charged by Mr. Watts with knowing nothing of anatomy, was observant of this law, which some of the Greek sculptors, by the way, were not. In some of the finest Greek sculptures the facial angle is sometimes a right angle, and sometimes even obtuse.

*The  
Facial  
Angle*

Mrs. Siddons was twenty-nine years of age and at the height of her popularity as the Queen of Tragedy when Gainsborough painted her.

It is impossible to look upon this beautiful portrait without being reminded of Dr. Johnson's tribute to Mrs. Siddons's memory: "She left nothing behind her to be censured or despised. Neither praise nor money, the two power-

*Mrs.  
Siddons*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

ful corrupters of mankind, seemed to have depraved her."

The picture of "Mrs. Sheridan," one of the loveliest women ever created, and her sister, would have made Gainsborough famous had he painted nothing else. Mrs. Tickell herself was enchanted with it, and writing to Mrs. Sheridan on November 2nd, 1785, said, "When I came home last night I found our picture come home from Gainsborough, very much improved and freshened up. My father and mother are quite in raptures over it. Indeed it is, in my opinion, the best and handsomest of *you* that I have ever seen."

Gainsborough's favourite dog seems to have been a white Pomeranian terrier. It was surely a poetic inspiration which prompted him to introduce this faithful creature into his picture of the beautiful but frail Perdita Robinson. What does a dog know of human frailty? He remains faithful to his master or his mistress through good report or ill report.

Several of Gainsborough's pictures, besides the "Duchess of Devonshire," have passed through strange vicissitudes. For half a century his portrait of the "Hon. Mrs. Graham" was lost sight of. On the removal of a partition in the room of the house where she died, it was found that the picture had been bricked up where it hung, so little were great works of art then valued by Scottish workmen and their

## Mysterious Purchase

employers. It is, however, possible that they may have acted on instructions, for Sir Thomas Graham was greatly affected by the untimely death of his beautiful wife. She was a daughter of Lord Cathcart, and was on her wedding tour when the picture was painted. She is represented standing in a graceful if conventional attitude, "divinely doing nothing," as Ruskin says. Crimson is the dominating colour of this picture, as blue is the dominating colour of the portrait of Mrs. Siddons. The picture was presented to the National Gallery of Scotland, in Edinburgh, by Mrs. Graham's grandson. Her husband afterwards became Lord Lynedoch. He had been a general in the Peninsular War, but late in life devoted himself to agricultural pursuits at his place on the river Almond, within a few miles of the fair city of Perth.

The portrait of "Lady Mulgrave" also contrasts with others of Gainsborough's most famous pictures, and affords further evidence of his infinite variety. Black drapery with lace flows loosely over the shoulders, exposing a lovely neck, on which is balanced a beautiful head with luxurious powdered hair. The picture is an embodiment of sweetness and light. What has become of it is somewhat of a mystery. It was knocked down at one of Christie's sales some years ago for 10,000 guineas to a bidder who paid for it in Bank of England notes and took it away with him. His name was Campbell. Nothing has since been heard of him or his treasure, though it is believed he took it to America.



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

Gainsborough painted with remarkable rapidity and with a very long-handled brush. It is said that his portrait of Mr. Linley in the Dulwich Gallery was painted in forty-eight minutes.

*Rapidity of Execution* The great painter, I suppose, is like the great musician: his hand will lose its cunning if not constantly at work. The immense number of pictures which Gainsborough painted makes him as great a marvel of industry as was Turner.

Breadth was his distinguishing characteristic, and what is meant by breadth in painting, says Professor Baldwin Brown, is best furnished by a comparison of the portraits by Reynolds, Gainsborough, and their school, with those by representative British portraitists, such as W. W. Ouless, R.A., and Sir George Reid. "The Reynolds-Gainsborough style was based essentially on a tradition drawn from Van Dyck, and was pictorial first and realistic only in a very secondary sense. Every portrait, that is to say, was studied as a picture in a rich but quiet harmony of colour, and was before everything beautiful as a work of art. Detail, either of features or dress, was not insisted on; the features were shown under an even light without strong shadows, and the effort was rather to generalise than to accentuate characteristic points; in the dress, the matter-of-fact forms of the *modiste* were often transformed into draperies as ideal as those of the Greek sculptor. In a word, while the artist recognised the claims of the facts before him to adequate portrayal, he endeavoured to

## Modern Portraiture

fuse all the elements of the piece into one lovely artistic unity, and in so doing secured in his work the predominant quality of 'breadth.' This 'broad' style, maintained also by Raeburn and Romney, was handed on to painters of less power, and died out in the first half of the nineteenth century in attenuated productions in which harmony became emptiness. To this has succeeded the modern style of portraiture, the dominant notes of which are truth and force. While the older school was seen at its best when dealing with the softer forms of the female sex, and of youth, the moderns excel in the delineation of character in strongly-marked male heads, and some of them can hardly succeed with a woman's portrait. They individualise and accent as much as the older men broadened and made beautiful. The fine appreciation of character in portraiture shown by Sir John Watson-Gordon, about the middle of the nineteenth century, marks the beginning of the forcible style now so favoured—a style suited to an age of keen intellectual activity, of science, and of matter-of-fact. There is more of nature, and hence to the uninitiated more of interest, in the portraits of this school, but less breadth, less harmony, less pictorial charm, than in those of the older tradition. The former may be best for the biographical ends of a national or family portrait-gallery, but the latter are best to live with—and after all is not this the soundest criterion of artistic excellence?"

Ruskin seems doubtful on this point. "I am not able," he says—"no man, unless one of their equals,

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

would be able—to tell you whether there is really more strength in Gainsborough, who can draw a mouth with one undulatory sweep of his pencil—or in Carpaccio, who will take half-an-hour at least to do apparently little more. But I can tell you positively that Carpaccio's work is faultless. When done, it is a mouth; and a perfect one; whereas Gainsborough's is only a lovely streak of vermilion, which looks like a mouth a little way off." It is impression, insight, inspiration, not imitation, that Gainsborough gives us, whether in his landscapes or in his portraits, and that is the secret of his power.

## CHAPTER IX.

### "TWILIGHT AND EVENING BELL."

A beautiful decline — Impulsive generosity — Bidding in bravado — A happy home — Cross-examined — Julius Cæsar's skull — To preserve silence — Relations with his family — Death of Humphrey — Painting at Kew — Jack Hill — The family coach — A trip to the lakes — Feeling for scenery — Irresistible — A painful premonition — Sheridan's great speech — Cancer — A noble passing — Farewell to Sir Joshua — Death of the Painter — Buried at Kew.

THE closing years of Gainsborough's life were spent in the enjoyment of all that should accompany old age — "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends."

In a letter to his sister, Mrs. Gibbon, written from London, he stated that he was living at the rate of £1000 a year, but still had enough to enable him to discharge the duties of a friend in need. Struggling artists, as well as the poorer members of his family, and even his old patron, Thicknesse, notwithstanding the breach that had taken place between them, had reason to be grateful for this. To give Thicknesse his due, it must be mentioned that even after the quarrel he interested himself in Gainsborough's movements, and volunteered to introduce to

*A  
Beautiful  
Decline*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

him some influential people whom he knew, and who might be of use. It is clear that Gainsborough bore Thicknesse no ill-will. Gainsborough, though hasty-tempered, was magnanimous. Thicknesse tells a story of him which proves that he had some of the impetuous generosity of Goldsmith.

“A gentleman and a friend of mine,” says Thicknesse, “had, without letting *me* know his distress, shot himself in this city [Bath]. I found by some *Impulsive* letters from a female, which came into my *Generosity* hands from the coroner, that he was connected with a woman in London, who had painted the distress of her mind in those letters *à la Gainsborough*. I wrote to her and her reply to me was of the same cast, and meeting Mr. Gainsborough going to the play when I had her letter in my hand, I showed it to him; I saw the stifled tear ready to burst from his eye and so quitted him; but instead of going to the play he returned home, sent me a bank-note in a letter, wherein he said: ‘I could not go to the play till I had relieved my mind by sending you the enclosed bank-note, which I beg you to transmit to the poor woman by to-morrow’s post.’ His susceptible mind and his benevolent heart led him into such repeated acts of generosity.”

Of his reckless generosity in another direction there is a good story told by Northcote:—

“There was a little picture of one of the Infants of Spain on horseback, by Velasquez, which Mr. Agar had, and with which Gainsborough was so transported that he said in a fit of bravado to the servant who





"Ralph Schomberg" (v. 191).



## In the Home Circle

showed it, 'Tell your master I will give him a thousand pounds for that picture.' Mr. Agar began to consider what pictures he could purchase with the money,—if he parted with this; and at last having made up his mind, sent Gainsborough word he might have the picture—who, not at all expecting this result, was a good deal confused, and declared, however he might admire it, he could not afford to give so large a sum for it." The picture is now in the Dulwich Gallery.

*Bidding  
in  
Bravado*

Gainsborough was now not only famous and prosperous, but continued to be happy in his domestic relations. It has indeed been insinuated, although not a particle of evidence has been brought forward in support of the gratuitous suggestion, that he was not faithful to his wife. Such a calumny, however, verges on the ludicrous, for everything that we know of the painter's character and circumstances goes to refute it. Gainsborough spent most of his evenings at home with his wife and two daughters, chatting and joking with them as he sketched or painted. He was in the habit of painting by candle-light, a practice for which Sir Joshua, in one of his lectures to the Royal Academy students, highly commended him. He rather shunned than courted the society of women beyond his own small family. Even of the society of distinguished men he was limited in his choice. He did not belong to the Johnson set. Their conversation would probably

*A Happy  
Home*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

have bored him. But he was doubtless introduced to them, for the great Doctor himself sat to him for his portrait. Garrick, indeed, who seems to have reciprocated Gainsborough's admiration, once asked him to dinner to meet the Doctor. With his keen eye for facial peculiarities, Gainsborough, we are told, was intensely amused at old Samuel's habit of nodding his head. What he thought of the great man's discourse is not recorded. It was where wits forgathered for an evening of conviviality, repartee, music, and song, and where he could throw off conventionalities, that Gainsborough was thoroughly at home. He himself was clever at repartee.

Northcote tells us that an eminent counsel once attempted to puzzle Gainsborough by cross-examining him at the trial of a case in which he was subpœnaed as a witness. The issue turned upon the originality of a picture.

"I observe," said the counsel, "you lay great stress on the phrase, the *painter's eye*; what do you mean by that?"

"The painter's eye," answered Gainsborough, "is to him what the lawyer's tongue is to you."

He was full of fun, and used his sense of humour to put his sitters in good form. On the chimney-piece of his studio stood a child's skull which had been given to him, probably by Dr. John Hunter, his medical adviser. A venerable sitter (probably a model) named Fowler looked at it with intense interest.

## Homage to Music

"Ah! Master Fowler," said Gainsborough, "that is a mighty curiosity."

"What might it be, sir, if I may make so bold?"

"A whale's eye," said the painter.

"No, no, never say so, Muster Gainsborough! Sir, it is a little child's skull!"

"You have hit it," said Gainsborough. "Why, Fowler, you're a witch! But what will you say when I tell you that it is the skull of Julius Cæsar when he was a little boy?"

"Laws, what a wonder!" cried the old man.

He was sometimes so carried away on hearing good music that he insisted on giving to the performers pictures now worth thousands of pounds. To Colonel Hamilton, boxer and fine amateur violinist, he gave, after hearing him play a solo, the now famous "Boy at the Stile," which the Colonel had often offered to buy.

In his *Memoirs of Nollekens* J. T. Smith gives an interesting account of his introduction by the sculptor to Gainsborough. Smith at the time was only fourteen years old. They arrived at Schomberg House while the Colonel was playing. To prevent interruption, Gainsborough gave Nollekens a book of sketches and whispered to him to take any two he liked.

To  
Preserve  
Silence

After the Colonel had done playing, and Nollekens had secured his plunder, Gainsborough, says Smith, "begged him to criticise a donkey's head which he had just modelled. Nollekens looked at it, and then—



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

“‘You should model more with your thumbs,’ he said; ‘thumb it about till you get it into shape.’

“‘What,’ said Gainsborough, ‘in this manner?’ Having taken up a bit of clay, and looking at a picture of Abel’s Pomeranian dog which hung over the mantel-piece, ‘This way?’

“‘Yes,’ said Nollekens; ‘you will do a great deal more with your thumbs.’

“Mr. Gainsborough, by whom I was standing, observed to me:

“‘You enjoyed the music, my little fellow, and I’m sure you long for this model; there, I will give it to you,’ and I am delighted with it still.”

Gainsborough, however, could make himself happy in serious as well as in rollicking company. To his brother Humphrey, the devout and ingenious minister of the Independent Chapel at Henley, he was deeply attached. The brothers frequently visited each other after Gainsborough’s settlement at Schomberg House.

The following letter written to his sister, Mrs. Gibbon, reveals the homely and affectionate side of Gainsborough’s character:—

“LONDON,

“Nov. 13th, 1775.

“DEAR SISTER,—We return you our best thanks for the excellent present of fish, which turned out as good as ever was eaten, and came very timely for brother Humphrey to take part with us. He went home to

## Essential Thing

Henley to-day, having been with us ten days, which was as long as he could well be absent from his business of collecting the tolls upon the river. He was as well as could be expected, considering his affliction for the loss of his poor wife. We did all we could to comfort him, and wish him every possible happiness, as he is a good creature. My wife has been but very indifferent with the disorder that goes about in all parts of London; it seems to be a sort of cold, attended by a bad cough, and it has gone through our family, servants and all; but, thank God, we are upon the mending hand; we don't hear of people dying of it, though 'tis universal. I am glad to hear business in the lodging-house way goes on so well. I know you would willingly keep the cart upon the wheels, till you go to Heaven, though you deserve to ride there in something better. I told Humphrey you were a rank Methodist, who says you had better be a Presbyterian, but I say Church of England. It does not signify what if you are free from hypocrisy, and don't set your heart upon worldly honours and wealth. I wish you long life and happiness, and remain,

“Your affectionate brother,

“THO. GAINSBOROUGH.”

But the shadow of death was shortly to cross the threshold of the Henley home, and one of Gainsborough's greatest domestic afflictions was the loss of his brother. The following letter gives us a sketch of Gainsborough in his character of executor under his brother's will:—

*Death of  
Humphrey*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

"DEAR SISTER,—I have been going to write to you every post for this month past, but was desirous of acquainting you with what I had done towards settling my brother Humphrey's affairs, and therefore postponed writing till I had sold the stock. . . . Mr. Cooper advises me to keep on the house till we can make the most of the steam-engine (as the work, if taken to pieces, perhaps may never be put together again), and also the maid in the house, lest any discovery should be made of it. The goods are sold but none of the beds, nor have I any account yet from Henley, so as to be able to settle anything. We hope both you and Sally continue in good health and good bustling spirits, and join in best affections to you both.

"T. G."

The steam-engine which Humphrey had invented could not be found. It would be interesting to know what became of that model, or whether it ever got into the hands of some one who showed it or explained its principle to Newcomen or Watt. I do not for a moment wish to suggest that either of these geniuses was a plagiarist, but if Humphrey Gainsborough had been possessed of business capacity and worldly wisdom he would have shared with them the honour of being a pioneer of the modern method of locomotion.

It was probably during one of his visits to Henley that Gainsborough became so enchanted with the scenery of the upper reaches of the Thames that he decided to take a house on Kew Green, where he

## Sets up his Coach

could go occasionally to sketch. Change of work from portrait to landscape painting was his recreation. Some of his finest landscapes, including the "Mushroom Girl," the "Woodman in a Storm," and the "Shepherd Boy in a Storm," were painted during his second London period.

*Painting  
at Kew*

It was at Kew that Gainsborough first caught sight of handsome Jack Hill, a lad of fifteen. Gainsborough was so struck with his beauty that he wanted to adopt him as his son, but Jack did not care for the honour thus paid him. He objected to sit as a model, and preferred a gipsy life to London society. In spite of the affection which Mrs. Gainsborough, as well as her husband, felt for him, and the kindness with which they treated him, he ran away.

*Jack Hill*

Gainsborough was now prosperous enough to afford to keep a coach, a rather costly luxury in those days. In an undated letter to Mrs. Gibbon he wrote:—"My family had a great desire to make a journey to Ipswich, to Mr. and Mrs. Kilderbee's, for a fortnight, and last Sunday morning I packed them off in their own coach, with David on horseback; and Molly wrote to me to let me know that they arrived very safe; but somehow or other they seem desirous of returning rather sooner than the proposed time, as they desire me to go for them by next Tuesday; the bargain was that I should fetch them home. I don't know what's the matter, either people don't pay them honour enough for ladies that *keep a*

*The  
Family  
Coach*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

*coach*, or else madam is afraid to trust me alone in this great town."

It was in the summer of 1783 that Gainsborough resolved to make a journey to the Cumberland and Westmorland Lakes. Amongst the friends *A Trip to* he had made at Bath was Dr. Pearce, a *the Lakes* medical practitioner, to whom he confided this intention. We may, perhaps, therefore conclude that it was for his health as well as for the purpose of enlarging his experience of landscape scenery that he determined upon this trip to the Lake Country. He had done an enormous amount of work during the nine years that he had made Schomberg House his headquarters, and no doubt felt the want of rest. The following is the letter in which he announces his intention to Dr. Pearce:—

"KEW GREEN (1783).

"DEAR SIR,—I don't know if I told you that I'm going along with a Suffolk friend to visit the lakes in Cumberland and Westmorland, and purpose when I come back to show you that your Grays and Dr. Browns are tawdry fan-painters. I purpose to mount all the lakes at the next Exhibition in the great style, and you know if the people don't like them 'tis only jumping into one of the deepest of them from off a wooded island, and my reputation will be fixed for ever! I took the liberty of sending you a little perry out of Worcestershire, and when the weather settles in hot again should be much obliged if you and Mrs. P.





'Miss Haverfield' (p. 192).



## Wordsworth's Country

would drink a little of it and fancy it champagne for my sake. I doubt whether I can shake you by the hand before I go, but when I come back I'll shake you by the collar, if you'll promise to keep your hands still."

While Gainsborough was making his sojourn in the Lake Country Wordsworth was at school at Hawkshead, trying his 'prentice hand at building the lofty rhyme. It was one of Scott's proudest recollections that as a lad he had met Burns. It would be interesting to

*Feeling  
for  
Scenery*

know whether Wordsworth in his boyish rambles ever met Gainsborough. As interpreters of Nature they had this in common, that they caught the new spirit of which I have already spoken (Chap. I.). No sooner had Gainsborough gazed upon the Lakeland scenery than the "power of the hills was upon him," and had he lived a few years longer he would undoubtedly have taken a new departure in landscape work. He would probably have had his third period like Turner. I have elsewhere pointed out that Gainsborough was the first great artist who ever painted a mountain. It is important to lay stress upon the influence which the Westmorland scenery had upon him, because other men of genius had gazed upon the same scenery without emotion. Goldsmith said he liked Holland, "because there were no mountains to obstruct the view." Gainsborough was the first to discover that mountains added enchantment to the view. Lakeland is a replica of Switzerland on a greatly reduced scale. As he

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

sauntered by its still waters reflecting the deep mountain shadows, or wandered by its rapids fed by cascades plunging from perilous precipices, he could muse in spirit with Wordsworth:—

“Far from my dearest friend, ’tis mine to rove  
Through bare grey dell, high wood and pastoral cove;  
Where Derwent stops his course to hear the roar  
That stuns the tremulous cliffs of high Lodore;  
Where peace to Grasmere’s lonely island leads  
To willowy hedgerows, and to emerald meads;  
Leads to her bridge, rude church and cottaged grounds,  
Her rocky sheepwalks, and her woodland bounds;  
Where, deep embosomed, shy Winander peeps,  
’Mid clustering isles, and holly-sprinkled steepes;

• • • • •  
“While, near the midway cliff, the silvered kite  
In many a whistling circle wheels her flight,  
Slant watery lights, from parting clouds, apace  
Travel along the precipice’s base;  
Cheering its naked waste of scattered stone,  
By lichens grey, and scanty moss o’ergrown;  
Where scarce the foxglove peeps on thistle’s beard:  
And restless stone-chat, all day long, is heard.

• • • • •  
“Even here amid the sweep of endless woods,  
Blue pomp of lakes, high cliffs, and calling floods,  
Not undelighted are the simplest charms,  
Found by the grassy door of mountain farms.”

After his settlement in London, Gainsborough also made several visits to Bath. A pretty story is told of

## Coming of the End

his generosity to a poor lady on the occasion of one of these visits. She was a Mrs. Heathcote, whose children had all died of a fever, except one bright little boy five years of age. She *Irresistible* went to Gainsborough and implored him to paint a portrait of the child.

"I am here for a rest," he said, "and cannot do it."

She went away in great distress, but not in despair. She dressed the little fellow in his simple everyday clothes and took him for Gainsborough to see. The child's face was one which he could not resist, and he granted the mother's request.

In 1787 Gainsborough began to feel that the hand of death was upon him. One evening as he was dining at the house of Sir George Beaumont, with Sheridan and others, he had a sudden premonition that he had not long to live. He whispered to Sheridan that he wished to speak with him alone. They left the table together and went into another room, when Gainsborough said to his friend: "Now, don't laugh, but listen. I shall die soon. I know it; I feel it. I have less time to live than my looks infer, but for this I care not. What oppresses my mind is this: I have many acquaintances but few friends; and as I wish to have one worthy man to accompany me to the grave, I am desirous of bespeaking you. Will you come, ay or no?"

Sheridan vainly tried to persuade him that he was mistaken, but granted his request. Gainsborough then rejoined the party, and was cheerful for the rest of the

*A Painful  
Premoni-  
tion*



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

evening. Death had no terrors for him, though he had been brought up in a faith which made salvation doubtful for the vast majority of mankind.

A few months later he went to Westminster Hall to hear his friend Sheridan deliver his famous speech at the trial of Warren Hastings. Behind him was an open window through which there came a draught, which for some time, owing to the excitement of the occasion, he did not notice.

But suddenly he "felt something inexpressibly cold touch his neck." He knew that the draught was fanned

by the wings of the Angel of Death. His wife when he told her of the occurrence took a less gloomy view of it. She, however, consented at his request to send for a doctor, who found a swelling at the back of the neck, but told Gainsborough that it was not serious, and that he would be all right again when the warm weather came. Gainsborough was sceptical, and informed Mrs. Gibbon that his own opinion was that the swelling was developing into a cancer. On consulting other medical advisers Gainsborough found that he was right. He accepted the professional confirmation of his suspicion with the utmost calmness. He made his will, and for some weeks defied suffering by working on in his studio until he was at last compelled to take to his bed.

Nothing in life became Gainsborough more than his manner of leaving it. Knowing that his life-work was now ended, he waited patiently and uncomplainingly

## Last Summons

for the final summons. He sent for his old friends one by one to bid them farewell. When Sheridan came, Gainsborough reminded him of his promise to attend his funeral. The parting scene between the great painter and his famous rival, Sir Joshua Reynolds, is one of the most beautiful and most pathetic recorded in biographical literature.

*A Noble  
Passing*

At Gainsborough's own request he was visited by Sir Joshua, who has happily preserved for us an account of their final interview. The impression it made upon his mind was that Gainsborough's "regret at losing life was principally the regret of leaving his art." At the final leave-taking the great President received his dying rival's memorable assurance that will echo down the centuries: "We are all going to Heaven, and Van Dyck is of the company."

*Farewell  
to Sir  
Joshua*

On the 2nd of August, 1788, Gainsborough breathed his last. Thus passed away one of the greatest of the world's geniuses, one of the most honest, the most generous, the most lovable of men. On his deathbed he remembered his old friend, Joshua Kirby, of Ipswich, who had died some years before, and was buried in Kew Churchyard. Gainsborough begged that he might be buried beside him. His friends saw that the wish was carried out. Throughout the art world the news of the great master's death created a profound sensation. His old feud with the Royal

*Death  
of the  
Painter*

*Buried  
at Kew*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

Academy was forgotten, and the pall-bearers at his funeral were six prominent Academicians, including the President, West, Bartolozzi, Paul Sandby, Sir William Chambers, and Francis Cotes. Sheridan was faithful to his promise, and was a sorrowful mourner with other distinguished men at the last sad scene of all. A plain flat stone with a simple inscription, in accordance with Gainsborough's own request, is all that marks his resting-place within the shadow of one of the beautiful sylvan clusters at the entrance to Kew Gardens. His wife, the beloved sharer of his triumphs and sorrows, is also laid to rest there.

“Nor died he when his ebbing fame went less,  
But when fresh laurels courted him to live ;  
He seemed but to prevent some new success,  
As if above what triumphs earth could give.”

## CHAPTER X.

### SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS'S APPRECIATION.

The Fourteenth Discourse—Gainsborough's place—Compared with the Italians—His love for Art—Painting by candle-light—Congruity — The ruling passion — No Academic training — Painter and Poet — Fidelity — Hogarth — Richard Wilson — Gainsborough's colour language—Hatching.

His last interview with his dying rival so profoundly impressed Sir Joshua Reynolds that he declared that if any little jealousies had subsisted between them, "they were forgotten in those moments of sincerity." Five months later, on the occasion of distributing the prizes to the students of the Royal Academy, he devoted his address to an appreciative criticism of Gainsborough's life-work.

Beginning by urging the importance of an intelligent observation of Nature, and recommending his hearers to go not exclusively to the ancients, who "have studied the same Nature before us," but to seek examples "such as raise a reverence," nearer to our own time, Sir Joshua said:—"We have lately lost Mr. Gainsborough, one of the greatest ornaments of our Academy. It is not our business here to make panegyrics on the living, or even

*The  
Fourteenth  
Discourse*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

on the dead, who were of our body. The praise of the former might bear appearance of adulation; and the latter of untimely justice, perhaps, of envy to those whom we have still the happiness to enjoy, by an oblique suggestion of invidious comparisons.

“In discoursing, therefore, on the talents of the late Mr. Gainsborough, my object is, not so much to praise or to blame him, as to draw from his excellencies and defects matter of instruction to the students in our Academy. If ever this nation should produce genius sufficient to acquire to us the honourable distinction of

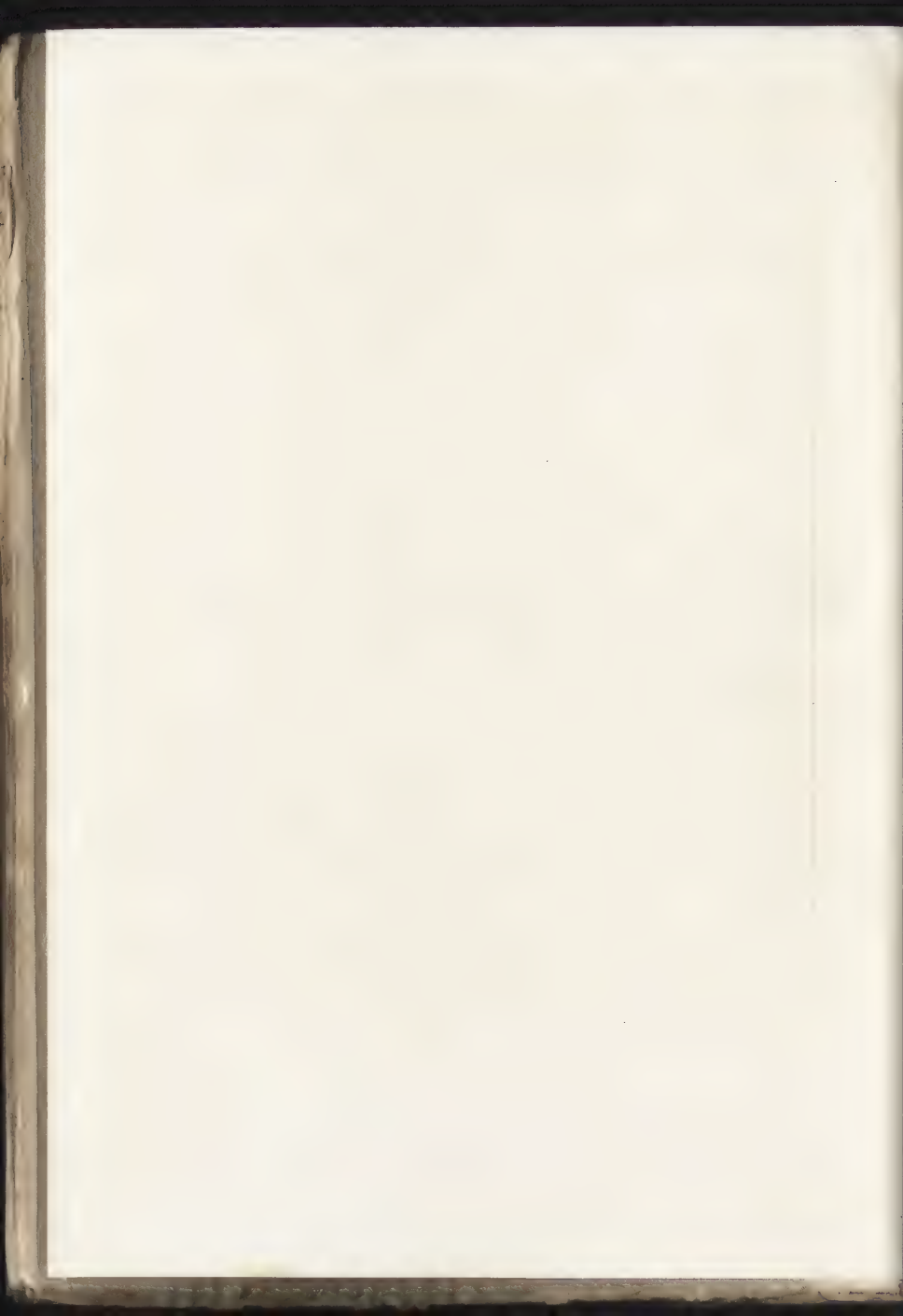
*Gains-  
borough's  
Place*

an English School, the name of Gainsborough will be transmitted to posterity, in the history of the art, among the very first of that rising name. That our reputation in the arts is now only rising must be acknowledged, and we must expect our advances to be attended with old prejudices as adversaries, and not as supporters; standing in this respect in a very different situation from the late artists of the Roman School, to whose reputation ancient prejudices have certainly contributed: the way was prepared for them, and they may be said rather to have lived in the reputation of their country, than to have contributed to it; whilst whatever celebrity is obtained by English artists can arise only from the operation of a fair and true comparison. And when they communicate to their country a share of their reputation, it is a portion of fame not borrowed from others, but solely acquired by their own labour and talents.”





"Miss Linley" (p 200).



## Basis of Lasting Fame

The President then went on to refer to some contemporary Italian painters whose reputation would soon be forgotten, for the reason that they were imitators and not originators. Contrasting them with Gainsborough, he did not deny that they showed a superiority in a certain

*Compared  
with the  
Italians*

line of practice which to the eyes of common observers has the air of a learned composition, and "bears a sort of superficial resemblance to the manner of the great men who went before them;" but, he continued, "a man looking for real and lasting reputation, must unlearn much of the commonplace method so observable in the works of the [contemporary Italian] artists whom I have named. For my own part, I confess I take more interest in, and am more captivated with the powerful impression of Nature which Gainsborough exhibited in his portraits and in his landscapes, and the interesting simplicity and elegance of his little ordinary beggar children, than with any of the works of that [modern Roman] school. I am well aware how much I lay myself open to the censure and ridicule of the academical professors of other nations, in preferring the humble attempts of Gainsborough to the works of those regular graduates in the great historical style. But we have the sanction of all mankind in preferring a genius in a lower rank of art, to feebleness and insipidity in the highest."

After alluding to the difficulty of tracing the gradual advancement of a great artist, and the means by which he acquires excellence in his art, a process often imper-

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

ceptible to the artist himself, as it is the consequence of an accumulation of various ideas which his mind has received, he knows not how or when, Sir Joshua described such of Gainsborough's habits and practices as were the means by which "this extraordinary man" arrived at that high degree of excellence which we see and acknowledge in his works.

"Of these causes we must state, as the fundamental, the love which he had to his art; to which indeed, his whole mind appears to have been devoted, and to which everything was referred; and this we may fairly conclude from various circumstances of his life which were known to his intimate friends. Among others he had a habit of continually remarking to those who happened to be about him, whatever peculiarity of countenance, whatever accidental combination of figure, or happy effects of light and shadow, occurred in prospects, in the sky, in walking the streets, or in company. If, in his walks he found a character that he liked, and whose attendance was to be obtained, he ordered him to his house; and from the fields he brought into his painting-room, stumps of trees, weeds, and animals of various kinds; and designed them not from memory, but immediately from the objects. He even framed a kind of model of landscapes on his table; composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking-glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees and water. How far this latter practice may be useful in giving hints, the professors of landscape can best determine. Like

*His Love  
for Art*

## Light, Shade, Breadth, Tone

every other technical practice, it seems to me wholly to depend on the general talent of him who uses it. Such methods may be nothing better than contemptible and mischievous trifling; or they may be aids. I think upon the whole, unless we constantly refer to real nature, that practice may be more likely to do more harm than good. I mention it only as it shows the solicitude and extreme activity which he had about everything that related to his art; that he wished to have his objects embodied, as it were, and distinctly before him; that he neglected nothing which could keep his faculties in exercise, and derived hints from every sort of combination."

Of Gainsborough's practice of painting by candle-light, to which reference has already been made, Reynolds spoke in the highest terms of praise. It showed his great love for his art, and was a habit worthy of imitation. *Painting by Candle-light*  
"I am indeed much inclined to believe,"

continued Sir Joshua, "that it is a practice very advantageous and improving to an artist; for by this means he will acquire a new and a higher perception of what is great and beautiful in nature. By candle-light not only objects appear more beautiful, but from their being in a greater breadth of light and shadow, as well as having a greater breadth and uniformity of colour, nature appears in a higher style; and even the flesh seems to take a higher and richer tone of colour. Judgment is to direct us in the use to be made of this method of study; but the method itself is, I am sure, very advantageous. I have often imagined that the



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

two great colourists, Titian and Correggio, though I do not know that they painted by night, formed their high ideas of colouring from the effects of objects by this artificial light; but I am more assured, that whoever attentively studies the first and best manner of Guercino, will be convinced that he either painted by this light, or formed his manner on this conception.

“Another practice Gainsborough had, which is worth mentioning, as it is certainly worthy of imitation, I mean his manner of forming all the parts of *Congruity* his picture together; the whole going on at the same time, in the same manner as Nature creates her works. Though this method is not uncommon to those who have been regularly educated, yet probably it was suggested to him by his own natural sagacity.”

After urging that the first thing required to excel in Art is not only a love for it but an enthusiastic ambition to excel in it, the President remarked that of Gainsborough it was certainly true that his passion was not the acquirement of riches but excellence in his art; and aspiration after honourable fame—“that he felt this ruling passion strong in death I am myself a witness.” Reynolds then gave a brief account of the death-bed scene already described.

“When such a man as Gainsborough arrives to great fame without the assistance of an academical education, without travelling to Italy, or any of those preparatory studies which have been so often recommended, he is

## Subjects Everywhere

produced as an instance how little such studies are necessary; since so great excellence may be acquired without them. This is an inference not warranted by the success of any individual; and I trust it will not be thought that I wish to make this use of it. It must be remembered

*No  
Academic  
Training*

that the style and department of art which Gainsborough chose, and in which he so much excelled, did not require that he should go out of his own country for the objects of his study; they were everywhere about him; he found them in the streets and in the fields; and, from the models thus accidentally found, he selected with great judgment such as suited his purpose. As his studies were directed to the living world principally, he did not pay a general attention to the works of the various masters, though they are in my opinion always of great use, even when the character of our subject requires us to depart from some of their principles. It cannot be denied that excellence in the department of the art which he professed may exist without them; that in such subjects, and in the manner that belongs to them, the want of them is supplied, and more than supplied, by natural sagacity, and a minute observation of particular nature. If Gainsborough did not look at Nature with a poet's eye, it must be acknowledged that he saw her with the eye of a painter, and gave a faithful, if not a poetical, representation of what he had before him."

The distinction here made between the painter's and the poet's eye is not a happy one. Every great painter

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

is necessarily a poet. What Sir Joshua really meant, however, was that Gainsborough faithfully reproduced impressions of what he had actually  
*Painter* seen without drawing upon his imagination  
*and Poet* for fanciful, mythological, or incongruous adornments.

After pointing out the difficulty of determining whether Gainsborough's portraits were more admirable for exact truth of resemblance or his landscapes for a portrait-like representation of Nature (on which I have already commented), such as we see in the works of Rubens, Ruysdael, and others, the President continued:—

“When he [Gainsborough] had fixed on his object of imitation, whether it was the mean and vulgar forms of  
*Fidelity* a woodcutter, or a child of an interesting character, as he did not attempt to raise the one, so neither did he lose any of the natural grace and elegance of the other; such a grace and such an elegance as are more frequently found in cottages than in courts. This excellence was his own, the result of his particular observation and taste; for this he was certainly not indebted to the Flemish School, nor indeed to any school; for his grace was not academical or antique, but selected by himself from the great school of Nature; and there are yet a thousand modes of grace, which are neither theirs nor his but lie open in the multiplied scenes and figures of life, to be brought out by faithful and skilful observers. Upon the whole we may justly say, that whatever he attempted he carried to a high degree of excellence. It

## History Painting Avoided

is to the credit of his good sense and judgment, that he never did attempt that style of historical painting for which his previous studies had made no preparation."

The President contrasted this sensible method of Gainsborough with what he regarded as the less fortunate procedure of both Hogarth and Wilson. "Our late excellent Hogarth with *Hogarth* all his extraordinary talents" was not, Sir Joshua thought, blest with a knowledge of his own deficiencies, or of the bounds which were set to the extent of his own powers. After he had spent the greater part of his life in achieving undying fame as a satirist in colour, Hogarth very imprudently, "or rather presumptuously, attempted the great historical style for which his previous habits had by no means prepared him: he was indeed so entirely unacquainted with the principles of this style, that he was not even aware that any artificial preparation was at all necessary. It is to be regretted that any part of the life of such a genius should be fruitlessly employed. Let his failure teach us not to indulge in the vain imagination, that by a momentary resolution we can give either dexterity to the hand or a new habit to the mind."

The President was equally severe on Wilson for having been guilty, like many of his predecessors, of introducing mythological beings into scenes which were quite out of character with the fabled surroundings of such personages. "His landscapes were in reality too near common

*Richard  
Wilson*



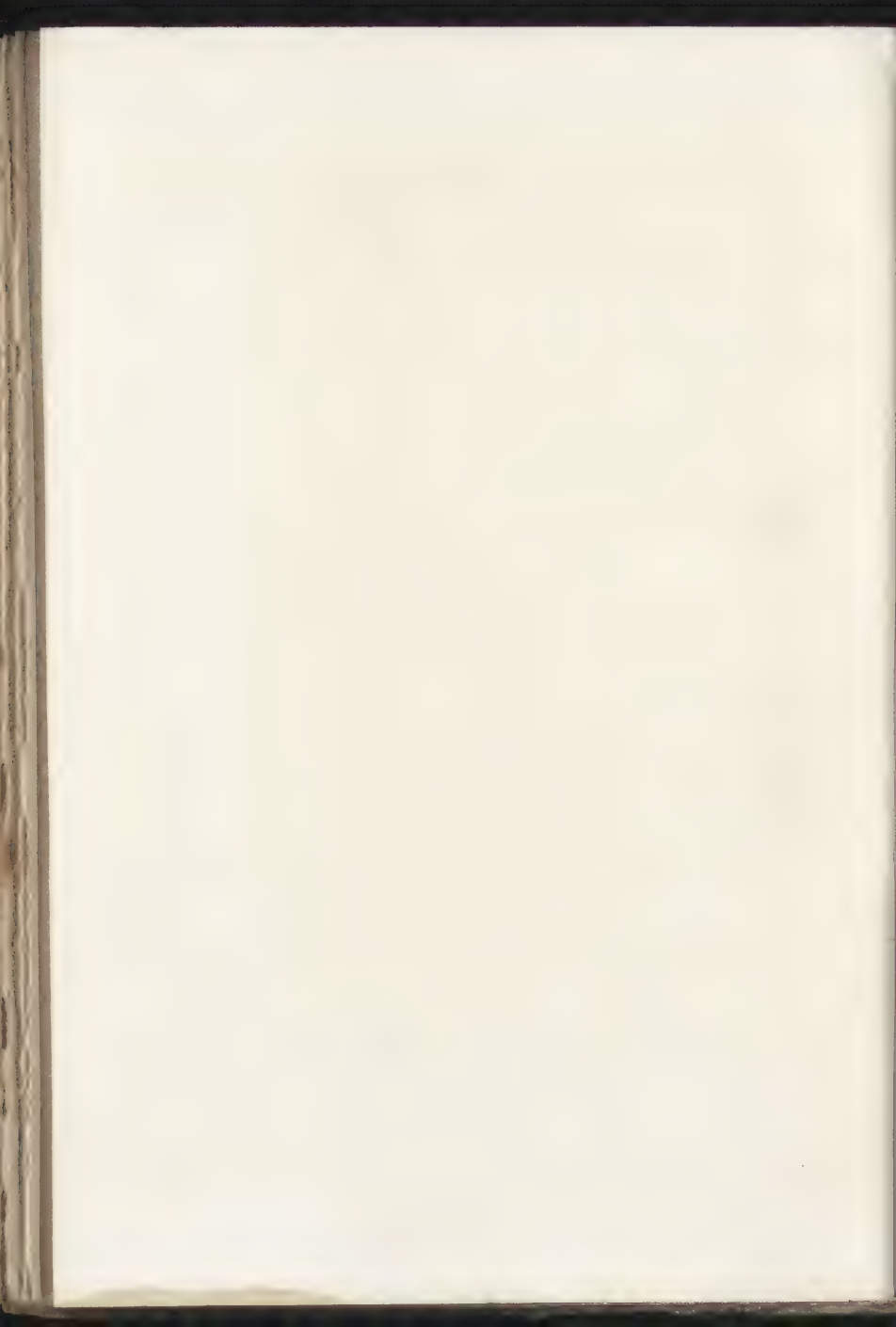
## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

nature to admit supernatural objects. In consequence of this mistake, in a very admirable picture of a storm, which I have seen of his hand, many figures are introduced in the foreground, some in apparent distress, and some struck dead, as a spectator would naturally suppose, by the lightning; had not the painter injudiciously (as I think) rather chosen that their death should be imputed to a little Apollo, who appears in the sky with his bent bow, and that those figures should be considered as the children of Niobe. To manage a subject of this kind, a peculiar style of art is required; and it can only be done without impropriety, or even without ridicule, when we adapt the character of the landscape, and that too in all its parts, to the historical or poetical representation. This is a very difficult adventure, and it requires a mind thrown back two thousand years, and as it were naturalised in antiquity, like that of Nicolo Poussin, to achieve it. In the picture alluded to, the first idea that presents itself is that of wonder, at seeing a figure in so uncommon a situation as that in which the Apollo is placed; for the clouds on which he kneels have not the appearance of being able to support him; they have neither the substance nor the form fit for the receptacle of a human figure; and they do not possess in any respect that romantic character which is appropriated to such an object, and which alone can harmonise with poetical stories. It appears to me, that such conduct is no less absurd than if a plain man, giving a relation of a real distress, occasioned by an inundation accompanied with thunder and lightning,





"Study: Lady Walking" (p. 203).



## Mythological Mixtures

should, instead of simply relating the event, take it into his head, in order to give a grace to his narration, to talk of Jupiter Pluvius, or Jupiter and his thunderbolts, or any other figurative idea; an intermixture which though in poetry, with its proper preparations and accompaniments, it might be managed with effect, yet in the instance before us would counteract the purpose of the narrator, and instead of being interesting would be only ridiculous."

Reynolds has been blamed in certain quarters for this censure of Wilson, but surely it does not violate the canons of fair criticism. Equally just, however, is the criticism that, while censuring Wilson for introducing poetical imagery into his landscapes and praising Gainsborough for avoiding this mistake, Reynolds himself was making gods and goddesses of his sitters. As Burnet in a note on the Fourteenth Discourse points out, Reynolds makes Venus lend her cestus to one lady, and Cupid his bow and quiver to another; "nor is he over-nice in mixing terrestrial with celestial matters; when he paints Mrs. Siddons in the clouds, as the Tragic Muse, gives her a large arm-chair to sit in, and raises her foot by means of a footstool. Dr. Beattie, in his gown and bands, is assisted by the Angel of Light and Truth in driving Infidelity into darkness, represented by likenesses of Hume and Voltaire. Goldsmith in his good-natured way has a sly cut at these incongruities: in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, Dr. Primrose says: 'My wife desired to be represented as Venus, and the painter was requested

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

not to be too frugal of the diamonds in her stomacher and hair. Her two little ones were to be as Cupids by her side, while I in my gown and band was to present her with my book on the Whistonian controversy.’”

It does not follow, however, that while censuring Wilson for faults from which Gainsborough was free, Sir Joshua was unconscious of his own mythological inclinations.

Returning to Gainsborough, the President remarked the peculiarity of his manner—the language of colour in which he expressed his ideas had been considered by many as his greatest defect. *Gainsborough's Colour Language* The peculiarity he referred to is that quoted in Chapter V. (p. 92), in which the necessity of looking at Gainsborough's pictures at the right distance is pointed out. Without entering into the discussion whether this was a defect or not, Sir Joshua admitted that it was “intermixed with great beauties.” The slightness which we see in Gainsborough's best works cannot, urged Sir Joshua, always be imputed to negligence. “However they may appear to superficial observers, painters know very well that a steady attention to the general effect takes up more time, and is much more laborious to the mind, than any mode of high finishing or smoothness without such attention. His handling, the manner of leaving the colours, or in other words, the methods he used for producing the effect, had very much the appearance of the work of an artist who had never

## Unfinished Finish

learned from others the usual and regular practice belonging to the art; but still, like a man of strong intuitive perception of what was required, he found out a way of his own to accomplish his purpose. It is no disgrace to the genius of Gainsborough to compare him with such men as we sometimes meet with, whose natural eloquence appears even in speaking a language which they can scarce be said to understand; and who, without knowing the appropriate expression of almost any one idea, contrive to communicate the lively and forcible impression of an energetic mind."

The President contended that the "hatching" manner of Gainsborough contributed to the lightness of effect which is so distinguishing a feature of all his pictures. "Gainsborough's portraits *Hatching* were often little more, as regards finishing or determining the form of the features, than what generally attends a dead colour," but as he was always attentive to the general effect or whole together, Sir Joshua considered that this unfinished manner was the secret of that striking resemblance for which the portraits are so remarkable. "Gainsborough, having truly a painter's eye for colouring, cultivated those effects of the art which proceed from colours; and sometimes appears to be indifferent or to neglect other excellencies. Whatever defects are acknowledged, let him still experience from us the same candour that we so freely give upon similar occasions to the ancient masters; let us not encourage that fastidious disposition which is discontented with every thing short



## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

of perfection, and unreasonably require, as we sometimes do, a union of excellencies, not perhaps quite compatible with each other. We may, on this ground, say even of the divine Raffaele, that he might have finished his picture as highly and as correctly as was his custom without heaviness of manner; and that Poussin might have preserved all his precision without hardness or dryness."

Sir Joshua's estimate of Gainsborough's genius is discriminating and just, and his forecast of the verdict of posterity on his great contemporary has been amply verified. His tribute to Gainsborough's memory has repeatedly been translated into French, and has rightly taken its place amongst the classics of Art-criticism.

## CHAPTER XI.

### GAINSBOROUGH'S PLACE IN ART.

A great master — The in-dwelling spirit — A cluster of geniuses —  
The most illustrious—Self-taught—Founder of English landscape—Richard Wilson — Ruskin's appreciation—Gainsborough's goddesses.

GAINSBOROUGH'S claim to a place in the front rank of the makers of British Art has never been disputed. Herein he differs from some others of the great painters of the School, who, before they won their way to that proud position, had to encounter much adverse criticism. Turner, for instance, when he entered upon his third period and produced those wonderful landscapes and sea-pieces which are amongst the chief glories of British Art, was regarded by the critics of his day as a man who had passed his prime, and had entered upon his dotage, until Ruskin arose to interpret him and place him among the immortals. Not even the jealousy of Gainsborough's rivals, however, could prevent them from acknowledging his genius. His chief rivals were Sir Joshua Reynolds and Richard Wilson, who did not like each other. At one of the dinners of the Royal

*A Great  
Master*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

Academy Reynolds remarked, "Yes, Gainsborough is certainly the best landscape-painter of the day."

"No," replied Wilson, who overheard Sir Joshua; "but he is the best portrait-painter."

There is nothing more mysterious than the birth of genius. Science cannot account for it, cannot explain why at irregular intervals of time great men arise to give the world a new revelation of the in-dwelling of the Divine Spirit in life or in nature. That is what is really accomplished by the great painter as by the great poet. Neither can be said to advance his art. He merely brings to light new phases of it. Advances may be made in the *technique* of Art, but not in the expression of it depending upon inspiration.

"The greatest poets," remarks Hazlitt, "the ablest orators, the best painters, and the finest sculptors that the world ever saw appeared soon after the birth of these arts, and lived in a state of society which was in other respects comparatively barbarous. Those arts which depend on individual genius and incommunicable power have always leaped at once from infancy to manhood, from the first rude dawn of invention to their meridian height and dazzling lustre, and have in general declined ever after. This is the peculiar distinction and privilege of each, of science and of art: of the one, never to attain its utmost summit of perfection, and of the other, to arrive at it almost at once. Homer, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Dante, and Ariosto (Milton alone was of a

*The In-dwelling Spirit*

*A Cluster of Geniuses*

## Chief Characteristic

later age, and not the worse for it), Raphael, Titian, Michael Angelo, Correggio, Cervantes, and Boccaccio—all lived near the beginning of their arts—perfected and all but created them. These giant sons of genius stand, indeed, upon the earth, but they tower above their fellows, and the long line of their successors does not interpose anything to obstruct their view or lessen their brightness. In strength and stature they are unrivalled, in grace and beauty they have never been surpassed. In after-ages and more refined periods (as they are called) great men have arisen one by one, as it were by throes and at intervals; though in general the best of these cultivated and artificial minds were of an inferior order, as Tasso and Pope among poets, Guido and Van Dyck among painters. But in the earliest stages of the arts, when the first mechanical difficulties had been got over and the language as it were acquired, they rose by clusters and in constellations, never to rise again."

Of the cluster—Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney—that arose in England at the beginning of her art history, the most brilliant was Gainsborough.

By his genius British art "leapt at once from infancy to manhood." Originality, both in conception and in the power of expression in colour, is his chief characteristic. There is no evidence to show that he had ever seen a good picture before he began to paint good pictures himself. He was his own teacher, and owed little to the schools. Reynolds and Romney both studied in Italy,

*The Most  
Illustrious*

*Self-  
taught*

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

but Gainsborough was never out of England. Like Raphael and Shakespeare and Hogarth, he never travelled. Some of his earlier works show a want of technical knowledge. Yet with all their faults they are constantly increasing in value. Gainsborough's pictures fetch higher prices every time they are brought to the hammer. He not only ranks with Reynolds and Romney as a portrait-painter, but to him must be conceded the honour of being the founder of the English School of landscape-painters. This is a distinction which has been claimed for Richard Wilson, who was some ten years Gainsborough's senior. This fact may have given rise to the impression that he anticipated Gainsborough in landscape-painting.

"I believe," says Ruskin, "that with the name of Richard Wilson the history of sincere landscape art, founded on a meditative love of Nature, begins for England: and, I may add, for Europe, without any wide extension of claim; for the only Continental landscape work of any sterling merit with which I am acquainted consists in the old-fashioned drawings, made fifty years ago to meet the demand of the first influx of British travellers into Switzerland after the fall of Napoleon. With Richard Wilson, at all events, our own true and modest schools began, an especial direction being presently given to them in the rendering effects of aerial perspective by the skill in water-colour of Girtin and Cousins."

It is curious that Ruskin mentions "a quiet pencil-



## Founder of English Landscape

drawing of a sunset at Rome," by Wilson, as entitling him to the claim of having been the discoverer of modern landscape art. "The modest art-skill of this picture is restricted almost exclusively to the expression of warm light in the low harmony of evening; but it differs wholly from the learned compositions and skilled artifices of former painting by its purity of unaffected pleasure and rest in the little that is given. Here, at last, we feel, is an honest Englishman, who has got away out of all the Camere, and the Loggie, and the Stanze, and the schools, and the Disputas, and the Incendios, and the Battaglias, and busts of this god, and torsos of that, and the chatter of the studio, and the rush of the Corso;—and has laid himself down, with his own poor eyes and heart, and the sun casting its light between ruins,—possessor, he, of so much of the evidently blessed peace of things,—he, and the poor lizard in the cranny of the stones beside him."

This "Sunset at Rome" should have reminded Ruskin that Wilson caught his inspiration from Italy, and that he did not begin to paint landscape until he went to Rome in 1749. Before that he had devoted himself to portrait-painting. Gainsborough was then busy at Ipswich, and had already produced his "Great Cornard Wood," "Freston Tower," and "Landguard Fort," a sea-piece (now destroyed) near the entrance to Harwich harbour. These pictures show that he, even before Wilson, was the possessor of the "blessed peace of things."

Ruskin, however, was not wanting in a right ap-

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

preciation of Gainsborough. He places him even before Turner as a colourist. In the preface to the second edition of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin turns his attention, with characteristic vigour, to a *Blackwood* reviewer, who, in the course of a critique on the Royal Academy of 1842, said that he thought Mr. Lee superior to Gainsborough. Whereon Ruskin exclaims: "Shade of Gainsborough! . . . Gainsborough's power of colour (it is mentioned by Sir Joshua as his peculiar gift) is capable of taking rank beside that of Rubens; he is the purest colourist, Sir Joshua himself not excepted, of the whole English School; with him, in fact, the art of painting did in great part die, and exists not now in Europe. . . . I hesitate not to say that in management and quality of singular and particular tint, in the purely technical part of painting, Turner is a child to Gainsborough. . . . Gainsborough's hand is as light as the sweep of a cloud, as swift as the flash of a sunbeam. . . . Gainsborough's masses are as broad as the first division in heaven of light from darkness; . . . Gainsborough's forms are grand, simple, and ideal, . . . Gainsborough never loses sight of his picture as a whole. . . . In a word, Gainsborough is an immortal painter." Again, "Gainsborough's excellence is based on principles of Art long acknowledged, and facts of nature universally apparent."

Ruskin is not equally just when he says "Gainsborough knew no goddesses other than Mrs. Graham or Mrs. Siddons." His real goddesses were simple rustic maidens, and it was through his influence chiefly

## “Supremely Gothic”

that “at last there arose, and arose inevitably, a feeling that, if not any more in Heaven, at least in the solitary places of the earth, there was a pleasure to be found based neither on pride nor sensuality.” *Gainsborough's Goddesses*

Ruskin assigns a great place to Gainsborough, however, in his summary of the course of Pagan and Gothic art. “You find from the earliest times, in Greece and Italy,” he says, “a multitude of artists gradually perfecting the knowledge and representation of the human body glorified by the exercises of war. And you have, north of Greece and Italy, innumerable and incorrigibly savage nations, representing with rude and irregular efforts, on huge stones and ice-borne boulders, on cave-bones and forest-stocks and logs, with any manner of innocent tinting or scratching possible to them, sometimes beasts, sometimes hobgoblins—sometimes Heaven only knows what; but never attaining any skill in figure drawing, until, whether invading or invaded, Greece and Italy teach them what a human being is like; and with that help they dream and blunder on through the centuries, achieving many fantastic and amusing things, more especially the art of rhyming, whereby they usually express their notions of things far better than by painting. Nevertheless, in due course we get a Holbein out of them; and, in the end, Sir Joshua and the supremely Gothic Gainsborough, whose last words we may take for a beautiful reconciliation of all schools and souls who have done their work

## Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

to the best of their knowledge and conscience. . . .  
'We are all going to Heaven.' Either that is true of men and nations, or else that they are going the other way; and the question of questions for them is—not how far from Heaven they are, but whether they are going to it. Whether in Gothic or Classic Art, it is not the wisdom or the barbarism that you have to estimate—not the skill nor the rudeness;—but the *tendency*."

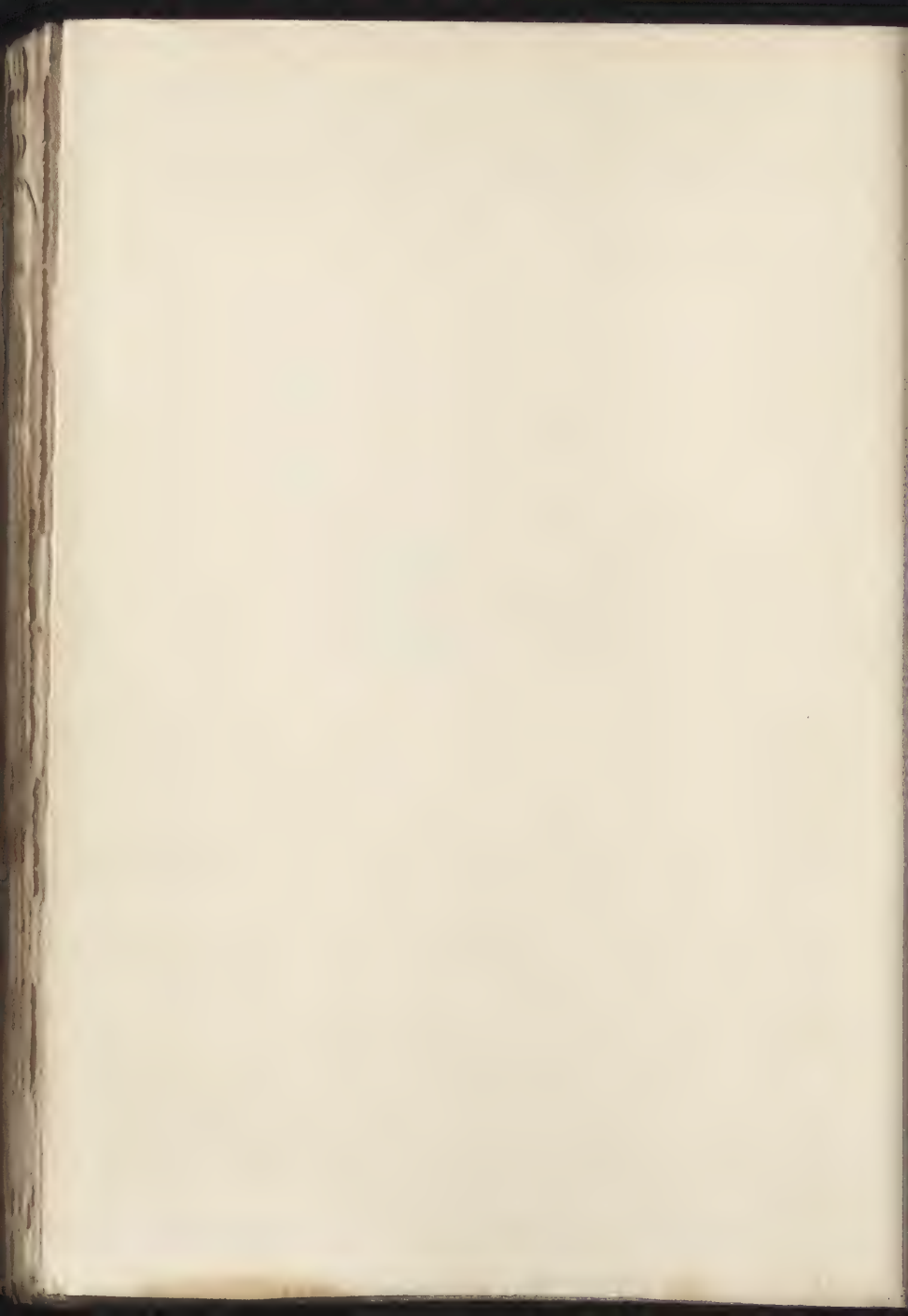
Who can deny the celestial tendency of Gainsborough? On rare occasions he may have painted objects unworthy of his art, but to no man more than to him are we indebted for the revelation of the angelic loveliness of woman, the spirituality of fine types in manhood and the wonder and the majesty, the mystery and the restfulness of that vast sum of our own sensations which we speak of as external Nature.

## Appendices.

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- I. PICTURES BY GAINSBOROUGH IN PUBLIC GALLERIES.
- II. PICTURES BY GAINSBOROUGH IN THE POSSESSION  
OF PRIVATE OWNERS.
- III. SUBJECTS REPEATEDLY TREATED BY GAINSBOROUGH.
- IV. SALES OF GAINSBOROUGH'S WORKS.
- V. BIBLIOGRAPHY.





## Appendix I.

### Pictures by Gainsborough in Public Galleries.

#### I. LONDON.

##### The National Gallery.

###### *Vestibule.*

The Baillie Family.

Ralph Schomberg.

###### *Room XVIII.*

Mrs. Siddons.

A Head.

Sir H. Bate Dudley.

Tristram and Fox.

Orpin, Parish Clerk.

The Painter's Daughters.

Cornard Wood.

Miss Gainsborough.

Musidora.

Two Small Landscapes.

###### *Room XIX.*

The Watering Place.

(Sketch for the picture in Room XXI.)

###### *Room XX.*

The Market Cart.

Cottage Children.

Dedham.

A Young Man.

The Watering Place (two distinct pictures).

###### *Room XXI.*

The Watering Place.

NOTE.—It is to be observed that there are four separate pictures in the National Gallery with the title of "The Watering Place."

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

## National Portrait Gallery.

Portrait of the Artist himself.  
Marquis Cornwallis, Governor-General, India.  
Lord Amherst, Governor-General, British North America.  
The Fourth Duke of Bedford, First Lord of Admiralty.  
John Henderson, Actor.  
George Colman, Dramatist.  
Admiral Edward Vernon.  
Stringer Lawrence, Defender of Trichinopoly.

## Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.

Queen Charlotte.  
Horses Drinking at a Trough.  
The Eldest Princesses (Daughters of George III.).  
His Two Daughters.  
Landscape with Cattle (Ionides Collection).

## Hampton Court.

Colonel St. Leger.  
Dr. Fischer, the Musician, Gainsborough's son-in-law.  
Dr. Hurd, Bishop of Worcester.  
Another of the same.  
A Rabbi, after Rembrandt.

## Greenwich Hospital.

John, First Earl of Sandwich, First Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty.

## Dulwich Gallery.

Mrs. Sheridan and Mrs. Tickell.  
Dr. Thomas Linley.  
Samuel Linley, R.N. (painted in forty-eight minutes).  
Thomas Linley, son of Dr. Linley.  
Mrs. Moodey and her Children.  
P. J. de Louthembourg, R.A.

## Wallace Gallery.

Mrs. Robinson, as "Perdita."  
Miss Haverfield.

# Appendix I.

## **British Museum.**

A collection of Gainsborough's drawings.

## II.

### **Abingdon Town Hall.**

George III. and Queen Charlotte.

### **Bath, Holbourne Museum.**

Lady in Blue Mantle.

Cramer, Metallurgist.

Landscape.

Richardson, Novelist.

Country Girl Feeding Pigs.

There was formerly a large portrait of Captain Wade, Master of the Ceremonies, in the Pump Room, but it was sold in 1903.

### **Birmingham Art Gallery.**

Sir Charles Holte.

### **Bristol Town Hall.**

Robert Nugent, M.P. Bristol, 1759; afterwards Baron Nugent, Viscount Clare and Earl Nugent.

### **Norwich Town Hall.**

Sir Harbord Harbord, afterwards first Lord Suffield.

### **Oxford, Christ Church.**

John Skynner, Student, 1742; afterwards Lord Chief Baron.

### **Stratford-on-Avon Town Hall.**

David Garrick. Exhibited at Society of Artists; said to have been presented by Garrick himself.

### **Windsor Castle.**

George III.

Duke of Gloucester as a boy.

Prince Regent.

Duke of York as a boy.

Duke of Cumberland.

Queen Charlotte.

Duchess of Cumberland.

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

## III. SCOTLAND AND IRELAND.

### National Gallery, Ireland.

Hugh, Duke of Northumberland, Lord Lieutenant, 1763.  
Two Portraits in Pencil (said to represent the painter's father  
and mother).  
Landscape in Suffolk.

### National Gallery of Scotland.

Hon. Mrs. Graham.

### Glasgow Gallery.

Donkeys in a Storm.

## IN PUBLIC GALLERIES ABROAD.

### Stuttgart.

Queen Charlotte, wife of George III.

A Boy Prince. Portrait of George III.'s son Octavius, who  
died in childhood.

These two pictures were discovered in 1902 by Professor Lange  
of the University of Tübingen. They were taken over from  
Windsor by the Princess Royal of England on her marriage  
in 1794 to Duke Frederic, who became first King of  
Württemberg. After her death in 1828 they were left in her  
bedroom in the castle of Ludwigsburg, long since un-  
tenanted, and had been quite forgotten until Professor  
Lange unearthed them.



## Appendix II.

### Pictures by Gainsborough in the Possession of Private Owners.

Comparatively few of Gainsborough's pictures are to be found in public galleries, and it is necessarily only at long intervals that a loan collection brings together his less-known works in any large array. It is hoped, therefore, that the following brief descriptions of paintings by him in the possession of private owners may supply a useful, if rough, idea of several fine examples of his art which can never be generally accessible :—

#### I.—PORTRAITS.

PICTURE.	DESCRIPTION.
Abel, C. F.	Seated at a table composing music: viol-da-gamba and bow resting on his left knee, his white Pomeranian dog at his feet under the table.
Almack, William	The subject stands in a wood, hat in hand, the arm resting on a branch; he wears a brown coat, with lace ruffles and a powdered wig; three-quarter length.
Ayton, John (Handsome Jack)	A slight misfortune has befallen this portrait. The nose

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

PICTURE.	DESCRIPTION.
Baccelli, Madame	was somewhat damaged, it is said, by a stupid servant-girl, who exclaimed, "Wherever I go, he will keep looking at me, and I ain't a-going to stand it any longer." She thereupon rubbed the face vigorously with a broom.
Bate-Dudley, Lady	Dancing; holding in her left hand the end of a flowing apron, her right arm behind her back; a tambourine in the right corner of the picture; landscape with trees to the left.
Beaufoy, Henry	Lady Bate-Dudley stands in a garden, and leans with her left elbow against a pedestal on which is an urn. She looks to the right. A white silk mantle, thrown artistically over the pedestal, forms a beautiful contrast to her blue drapery. "The colouring is remarkably tender and harmonious."— <i>Fulcher</i> .
Beaufoy, Mark	Shown in an easy standing attitude common with Gainsborough.
Blackstone, Sir Wm.	In an arm-chair; curtain background, allowing glimpse of landscape beyond.
Blue Boy, The	Justice of Common Pleas, in robes; document in hand.
	Van Dyck dress; full view; bare-headed; plumed broad-rimmed hat in right hand at his side; left hand resting

## Appendix II.

Brunton, Bessy	on his hip; background of landscape with dark cloudy sky. Property of the Duke of Westminster.
Buckinghamshire, John, Earl of	Actress who made her <i>début</i> at sixteen in the <i>Greilian Daughter</i> , her father being in the same piece. She is shown sitting in a landscape.
Buckinghamshire, Countess of	In a standing position near a column, on which he rests one of his hands, while the other is on his hip; coat of sky-blue, white satin vest with gold embroidery, scarlet robe.
Camden, Lord Chancellor	In white satin, with yellow gauze sash.
Christie, James	Hand resting on a folio.
Clarges, Lady	Leaning on his right elbow on a framed picture; three-quarter length.
Conway, Col. H. Seymour	Seated playing a harp; three-quarter length.
Cramer (metallurgist)	Turned slightly to the right, but looking to the left; hat in his left hand, a stick in his right, held against his hip; castle on a rocky steep above a stretch of water in the background; broken tree to the left.
Derby, Edward, 12th Earl of	Holding a piece of ore, while near him appears a volume of <i>Cramer on Metals</i> .
	In a dark coat with frill and ruffles; turned to the right and facing the spectator; right hand on a parapet; sky and

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

PICTURE.	DESCRIPTION.
Devonshire, Duchess of	<p>trees to the right with architecture and curtain background.</p> <p>For the different pictures of the Duchess <i>see</i> Appendix III. Mr. Pierpont Morgan's property is the famous portrait which was cut from its frame and stolen from Messrs. Agnew's Gallery, where it had been placed after achieving the then record auction price of 10,000 guineas. It represents the Duchess in her prime; she has on a white dress, with blue silk petticoat and sash; large black hat and feathers; her curled hair falls profusely on the shoulders; the complexion is brilliant; there is a sky background with foliage at either side.</p>
Eden, Dorothea, Lady	Seated, with arms crossed; hair turned back and powdered; dress low cut, lilac colour, trimmed with white; a scarf over her shoulder.
Fitzherbert, Mrs.	Nearly three-quarter length; seated, with her head resting lightly on the forefinger of the right hand; dark low-cut dress; hair falling on her shoulders.
Folkestone, Viscount	Painted from a portrait of the peer by Hudson. Wears peer's robes, and holds a "Plan of the Society of Arts." He was first President of the Society.
Foote, Samuel	Green coat; one hand in waistcoat pocket.

## Appendix II.

The statesman is represented addressing the House of Commons; blue coat and knee-breeches.

A view of St. Paul's in the distance.

Placing in her bosom a flower taken from a vase.

See Appendix III.

See Appendix III.

Face towards the spectator, body to the left; brocade low-cut dress.

Half-length; erect; head turned over left shoulder; high-collared coat and low-cut waistcoat, with full white frills and stock.

In a blue dress with embroidered sash and rosebuds.

Naval uniform; telescope in hand; stands near an anchor.

Full-length, in a landscape with large old tree; in a uniform consisting of white breeches and coat, with dark facings and epaulets; sword and staff, top-boots and spurs.

Little boy holding a black hat with feathers and a bunch of flowers. This (says Fulcher) is the lad whom Gainsborough, when on holiday at Bath, consented to paint after refusing to do so, yielding to the mother's request as he was her only remaining boy, and was "simply dressed!"

Fox, Charles James

Franco, Rafael

Gage, Lady

Garrick, David

George III.

Grafton, Duchess of

Grosvenor, Richard, Earl

Hallam, Mrs.

Harvey, Lord

Hastings, Marquis of

Heathcote, Master



# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

PICTURE.	DESCRIPTION.
Hervey, Captain Augustus	Standing with left arm on an anchor; left hand holding a telescope. Rocks and sea; battleships at anchor. Never exhibited.
Hingeston, Rev. A.	This is amongst the earliest examples of Gainsborough's art as a portrait-painter. It is a half-length, and there is a companion portrait of Mrs. Hingeston.
Hingeston, Mrs. ("when old")	This belongs to Gainsborough's latest period, as the portrait of the same subject "when young" belongs to his earliest. The shawl which Mrs. Hingeston wore at the sitting for the later picture is still preserved. It appears in the present portrait as an Indian shawl with green sprigs and red border.
Honywood, General	Riding in a woody landscape. One of Gainsborough's earliest exhibits at the Society of Arts (1765).
Linley, Miss	This portrait was known as the "Worthing Gainsborough," until Mr. Charles J. Wertheimer, to whom it belongs, fixed the identity. See the plate in this volume.
Linley, Miss, and her Brother	Miss Linley, in a low-cut dress, has her hands on her breast; the boy leans his face against her shoulder from behind; his eyes seek the spectator's.

## Appendix II.

Le Brun, Madame

Seated in a chair in a white dress, open at the neck, trimmed with lace; a scarf about her shoulders; hair curled and powdered; life-size; three-quarter length.

Mears, Mrs.

A full-length figure leaning with one arm on a pedestal, which is surmounted by an urn; she has a lofty head-dress of flowers, and under her lilac dress, which she holds with left hand, there show white petticoat and shoes.

Mulgrave, Lady

A bust; Lady Mulgrave is turned to her left but looks over her right shoulder; she has profuse powdered hair; and wears a white silk dress with black mantle. The picture fetched the second highest price ever obtained for a portrait up to 1896.

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Nugent, Robert, Earl (also Viscount Clare)

A whole-length. Fulcher's remark that Gainsborough exhibited in 1761 "an excellent whole-length portrait of Mr. Nugent, afterwards Lord Clare," must refer to this picture: it was therefore the first work Gainsborough exhibited. Another picture of the same subject belongs to the Bristol Corporation. *See* Appendix I.

Pitt, Wm.

For list of different portraits, *see* Appendix III.

Poyntz, William

A full-length figure, life-size; shooting dress, bare-headed, leaning on a tree; legs crossed; carrying a gun. Exhibited by Gainsborough at the Society of Arts in 1762.

Princesses, the Eldest

The Princesses are three in number; two are standing, and the third is seated.

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

PICTURE.	DESCRIPTION.
Rodney, Lord	Standing in uniform and wig on the deck of his ship, wearing the star and ribbon of the Garter ; left hand upon his sword ; right hand extended, as he faces in that direction ; ship of war in the rear.
Royal Family	Children of George III. descending the steps at a lodge in Windsor Park.
Sancho, Ignatius	Said to have been painted at Bath in an hour and forty minutes.
20 20 Sandby, Mr. and Mrs.	Lady and gentleman, seated in a landscape, with architecture ; the gentleman, in red coat and cocked hat and sword, turned to the lady on his right, with one hand raised ; the lady, in a very full pink and white dress with a blue fringed petticoat, has a fan in her left hand.
Sefton, Countess of	Standing in a landscape towards the spectator, her head turned to the right ; she holds a dark mantle lightly about her.
Sequeira, Isaac Henrique, M.D.	Blue dress, lace stock and frills, powdered wig ; seated, holding a book.
Sparrow, Miss	Bust, in an oval ; low-cut bodice with ermine border ; the hair, dressed high and done with pearls, is let fall from behind in ringlets on each shoulder.

## Appendix II.

Spencer, Hon. Miss, as a child (afterwards Duchess of Devon- shire)	The subject, about six years old, is represented with her hands folded before her, wearing a white, low frock, trimmed with ribbons, and a cap.
Spencer, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire	A sketch, in monochrome, of the famous Duchess when in her prime. She here wears a light dress and a large plumed hat, and is represented walking in a landscape with her arms folded.
Spencer ( <i>née</i> ), Duchess of Devon- shire	A life-size figure; her Grace's face is looking down; she wears a white dress, and her right elbow is on the base of a column, the right leg is before the left; she holds a scarf in both hands, and her hair is piled high. Land- scape background.
Stanhope, 3rd Earl	Unfinished at Gainsborough's death. The Earl is seated, and wears his peer's robes (scarlet ermine trimmed); three-quarter length.
Villebois, Mrs.	In blue dress trimmed with pearls; blue train and white petticoat, white satin shoes; scarf over her shoulders; hair rolled high above the forehead, feathers forming a conspicuous coiffure.
Wales, Prince of, afterwards George IV.	With Mrs. Fitzherbert, Lord Radnor, and R. B. Sheridan in a boat.

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

PICTURE.	DESCRIPTION.
Windham, Wm.	Life-size. Says Fulcher, "His whole face gives the idea of great manly beauty, amiable yet firm."
Wolfe, General	A bust; uniform with silver lace.
Bramford	2.—LANDSCAPES.
Cottage Children; or, The Wood Gatherers	Shepherd boy leaning on his staff at the edge of a rough pathway that leads through a field to a gate by the side of a brimming river; sheep reclining behind him on the grass, under a hedge with trees; on the far side of the river are some old pollards bending over the water, and farther on two cows; upland in distance, crowned by a church.
Cottage Door, The	A peasant girl carrying a flaxen-haired child; beside her a little boy with auburn hair is sitting holding sticks. The figures are said to be really portraits of the Earl of Romney and his sisters. There is another similar picture by Gainsborough.
	A general favourite among Gainsborough's works. Property of the Duke of Westminster. Said by Fulcher to be one of Gainsborough's latest paintings. It represents an old thatch almost hidden among trees on the banks of a



## Appendix II.

stream; on the left hand of the cottage is a broken oak, on the right a young tree; in front stands a mother with a baby in her arms; five children are round about her, one of them feeding himself from a jar with a spoon. For other pictures with the same title *see* Appendix III.

Some country people before a dwelling. "Very powerful and clear."—*Wagen*.

Sand-pit with a large oak near, in a rocky view; woman with an ass near the pit.

A track through a wood; under a high bank a gipsy man reclines; a woman sitting at his side gives her baby suck; on the other side of the track a girl carrying wood; a saddled donkey reclining.

A hillside covered with trees; peasants and colliers riding horseback; early morning effect.

Belonging to Lord Tweedmouth. A waggon and three horses, which the waggoner has just halted near some trees, with an open view beyond; in the waggon are seated some women and children, while a man, bending over the side, helps a young girl to climb up by the back wheel. This girl is said to be the artist's daughter. *See* Appendix III.

*See* Appendix III.

Cottage Door, A

Forest Scene

Gipsy Encampment

Going to Market

Harvest Waggon, The (also known  
as "The Return from Harvest")

Market Cart, The

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

PICTURE.	DESCRIPTION.
Pack-horse Bridge, The	Pack-horses, with a couple of men riding, crossing a bridge; a ruined tree in foreground.
Repose (also called "Evening")	Often called Gainsborough's <i>chef d'œuvre</i> . It represents some cattle under shady trees; among them an old white horse acts as foil to a black cow; there is a fountain near, and a peasant asleep on the grass; evening effect.
River Scene, with Cattle	To the right two women on the bank of a stream tend cows; to the left men landing fish in small boats from two smacks.
Rural Courtship	A forest scene, with a church in the distance; in the foreground a woman milking a cow, and at her side a peasant.
Rustic Dwelling, A	The door of a cottage with two women and two children; one of the women nurses a child; large trees, one almost bare, incline towards the cottage; a brook flowing to the front.
Rustics on a Road	Three peasants with four horses, a girl on a white pony, and a lad on foot with a rabbit over his shoulder and a dog at his side; in the middle distance there is a boy with sheep on a hill, while another boy lolls under an old tree. In front are a pool of water and a felled tree, in the distance a church.

## Appendix II.

Sand Getters, The

Two men filling a sack with sand; a pit and a knoll in a wood, with two donkeys near; a man and sheep on the right.

Shore Scene, A

Three figures near a white cliff; two boats in sail heeling to the wind; another boat on the beach.

Shockerwick

See Appendix IV., No. 15.

View in Shropshire

A stream running through the foreground; wooded country in the mid distance, hill beyond; on the far bank of the stream two cows and a goat in the shade of a mass of trees.

View at the Thames Mouth

Boats under sail; in the foreground a group round a boat which has been drawn up by a pier; an anchor and an old hull near.

Watering Place

See Appendix III.

Beggar Child, A

"Naive and lively in feeling, and of masterly execution."  
—*Waagen*.

Boys and Fighting Dogs

One boy tries to prevent another from stopping two dogs fighting.

Boy, The Shepherd's, in the Storm

A boy, ragged and bare-foot, lies on the ground under a steep bank with trees. He looks up, bare-headed, into

### 3.—SUBJECT PICTURES.

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

PICTURE.	DESCRIPTION.
Cottage Girl, The ("Lavinia")	the skies, which are dark with clouds, through which the rain makes an opening of light; a collie lies beside him. (A lost work.)
Cottage Girl, The	Bare-footed lassie carrying a basin of milk; in the background a woman milking a cow.
200 Cottage Interior, A: "Jack Hill in his Cottage."	"Gainsborough's bare-foot child on her way to the well with her little dog under her arm."— <i>Leslie's Handbook for Young Painters</i> .
Girl and Pigs	A boy ("Jack Hill") warms himself before the fire, whilst a girl takes her porridge.
Hagar and Ishmael	A peasant girl seated at the foot of a column in a landscape looking at some young pigs feeding out of a round, shallow dish.
Hobbinol and Ganderetta	So called in the catalogue of the British Institution of 1814. It represents a rocky scene with wood; a woman bearing a pitcher on her shoulder turns towards a boy who is crying. Two girls, one sitting and one kneeling, with a cat; one shows an empty bowl and a spoon.

Jack Hill and his Cat

Dog, Pomeranian, and Puppy

Race, The

Boy, scantily clad, standing by an old and ruined fence with a cat ; autumn effect of light and wind.

Interesting as having once adorned the wall over the mantel-piece in Gainsborough's studio. From it Gainsborough made a model in clay in the presence of Nollekens, the sculptor. Nollekens watched the work, and instructed the painter in the use of his thumbs for the process.

Two boys racing over downs on bare-backed donkeys without bridles ; the leading donkey is dark-coloured, and the rider is throwing up both arms with delight, while the other boy, riding a light-coloured animal, urges it forward by beating it vigorously with his hat : a group of interested spectators in the distance ; cloudy sky.

## Appendix II.



# Appendix III. Subjects repeatedly Treated by Gainsborough.

## I.—PORTRAITS.

SUBJECT.	DESCRIPTION.
Abel, C. F.	Two pictures. Besides the one referred to in Appendix II., there is a portrait in which he is represented in an old-fashioned chair playing on the viol-di-gamba.
Devonshire, Duchess of	<p>There are four portraits of this lady by Gainsborough. They may be enumerated thus :—</p> <p>(a) In the possession of Earl Spencer; a whole-length figure leaning against a column, with one leg before the other, and a scarf in her hands.</p> <p>(b) Belonging to Viscount Clifden; a full-length figure, represented walking in a landscape. A monochrome.</p> <p>(c) Also the property of Earl Spencer, a portrait of the famous beauty as a child of six (Lady Georgiana Spencer). See Appendix II.—Portraits.</p> <p>(d) The picture belonging to Mr. Pierpont Morgan, for which see Appendix II.—Portraits; and Appendix IV., No. I.</p>

## Appendix III.

Dunstanville, Sir Francis Basset,  
afterwards Lord de

Two pictures; one three-quarter length, standing bare-headed, dressed in blue coat, by rocks in a landscape.

Elliott, Mrs. Grace Dalrymple

Two pictures :—  
(a) Belonging to the Duke of Portland; half-length, standing, low-cut dress and hair dressed high.  
(b) A whole-length.

Fane, Mrs.

Gainsborough painted portraits of three ladies under this name.

Gainsborough, Thomas

Gainsborough painted himself separately several times, and once represented himself in company with his wife. A head was given to the Royal Academy by Margaret Gainsborough. A bust, in a three-cornered hat, forms the frontispiece to this volume. In a collection of figure-studies there appears one of the artist when young, sketching, by Lane; and Gainsborough has introduced himself into one of his own sketches.

Gainsborough, Humphrey

The painter's favourite brother, painted by him twice. One portrait was painted for Thomas Hall, of Henley.

Gainsborough, John

Of his eldest brother Gainsborough painted two portraits.

Gainsborough, Misses

There are, in all, seven portraits; two of Margaret separately, one of Mary (Mrs. Fischer) separately. Mary was also represented in the "Harvest Wagon."

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

SUBJECT.	DESCRIPTION.
Gainsborough, Mrs.	Three pictures. Two half-lengths (one as Miss Burr), and, according to Fulcher, a head, finely executed.
Garrick, David	There are six "Garricks" attributed to Gainsborough, though one—that at Christ Church, Oxford—is possibly not by him. In one picture the actor is represented together with his father.
George III.	Seven portraits, including A portrait of H.M. on horseback; troops in review. One in the robes of the Garter. One at the Royal Society of Musicians; a whole-length figure, standing, in dark coat and white breeches.
Giardini, Felice de	The best-known portrait was at the Grosvenor Gallery, 1885. It shows this famous violinist against a dark background in a red-laced coat, wig, and ruffles, with his right hand in his breast and hat under his arm.
Graham, Hon. Mrs.	(a) The famous picture in the National Gallery of Scotland. (b) The picture called "The Housemaid." <i>Note:</i> There is a copy of (a) at South Kensington by Maclise.
Henderson, John	Three pictures were painted of the actor, one of which is in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

## Appendix III.

Hingeston, Mrs.	Two pictures : "When Young" and "When Old."
Hurd, Bishop of Worcester	Three pictures, of which two are at Hampton Court.
Johnson, Dr. Samuel	Twice painted. Lent to Grosvenor Exhibition, 1885.
Middleton, Surgeon-Major	Two pictures :— (a) A half-length, in brown coat and yellow waistcoat. (b) Belonging to the Marquis of Lansdowne; a somewhat similar picture, said to represent Benjamin Franklin.
Moysey, Abel, Esq.	Two pictures :— (a) In the National Portrait Gallery, London; a study. (b) Full-length in a landscape; claret-coloured dress.
<sup>213</sup> Mulgrave, Lady	Three pictures, but one of doubtful authenticity. The famous "Lady Mulgrave" was sold at Christie's in 1895; see Appendix IV., No. 2.
Mulgrave, Lord	Two pictures :— (a) Whole length; in naval uniform, leaning against a table. (b) A half-length, in an oval.
Nugent, Robert, Earl (afterwards Lord Clare)	Two pictures :— (a) Belonging to the Bristol Corporation; three-quarter length, seated in red coat. (b) Whole length; Gainsborough's first exhibit, 1761.
Pitt, William	Many pictures :— (1) In Lincoln's Inn; three-quarter length; standing in

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

SUBJECT.	DESCRIPTION.
<p>Plampin, John, jun.</p> <p>Princesses, The Eldest</p>	<p>his robes as Chancellor of the Exchequer, leaning against a chair.</p> <p>(2) A three-quarter length. In the possession of Lord Bathurst.</p> <p>(3) Belonging to Earl Amherst.</p> <p>(4) Bust in an oval.</p> <p>(5) A half-length belonging to Lord Harrowby.</p> <p>(6) A three-quarter length in crayon belonging to Lord Normanton.</p> <p>(7) A three-quarter length formerly belonging to Sir R. Peel, Bart.</p> <p>(8) A three-quarter length belonging to the Duke of Richmond.</p> <p>(9) Belonging to Earl Stanhope.</p> <p>(10) A head at the Grosvenor Gallery, 1885.</p> <p>(11) In the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.</p> <p>There are even said to be more portraits of the same subject, but it must not be forgotten that Gainsborough also painted Pitt, Lord Rivers, and hence a confusion may have arisen.</p> <p>Two pictures. One a half-length in Van Dyck dress; the other is also a Van Dyck costume, but holds a book.</p> <p>Two pictures.</p>



## Appendix III.

Quin, James

At least two portraits exist, and a third of Quin as "Falstaff" is also ascribed to Gainsborough.

Tenducci, J. F.

There are two portraits of the famous male soprano.

Wales, Prince of

There are several portraits of the Prince painted by Gainsborough. They include the famous group in which H. R. H. appears with Mrs. Robinson and R. B. Sheridan in a boat, and also the picture in which he is represented as a child together with the Princess Royal. Of the separate portraits, one, a whole-length, was at the British Institution in 1815.

### II.—LANDSCAPES.

Cottage Door, The

There are four pictures under this title. The most famous is that at Grosvenor House, London (*see* Appendix II.—Landscapes), of which he painted two replicas. Another picture with the same title differs from the Duke of Westminster's picture in that a man and woman are seen before the door with three children, and there is a view of open country through the trees.

A picture belonging to the Duke of Rutland is called "*A Cottage Door*." *See* Appendix II.—Landscapes.

Evening

In addition to the *chef d'œuvre* which Gainsborough gave to his daughter, and which had the alternative title of "*Repose*" (*see* Appendix II.—Landscapes), there are two landscapes which have been designated "*Evening*."

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

PICTURE.	DESCRIPTION.
Girl, The Cottage	<p>This is an alternative title of "Lavinia," as well as the proper title of a somewhat similar picture. "Lavinia" carries a bowl of milk, while in the background a woman milks a cow; the other "Cottage Girl," goes barefoot to the well with her little dog under her arm and a jug in her hand.</p>
Harvest Waggon, The	<p>There are three landscapes, almost identical, by this name. They represent a waggon with women and children in it, and a waggoner leaning over the side to help a young girl (the painter's daughter) to climb up by the wheel. One of the pictures belongs to Lord Tweedmouth. An alternative title for all three is "The Return from Harvest."</p>
Market Cart, The	<p>This title has given rise to some confusion. It has sometimes been applied to the "Harvest Waggon" and sometimes to the "Watering Place" (waggon and horses passing a brook) in the National Gallery. There are, properly, three "Market Carts," as distinct from these two thus misnamed—viz., the National Gallery picture of a rustic cart passing a rough road through a wood; a small replica thereof; and another landscape, now in New York, representing a country road (near which a boat-shed is introduced), and a cart trending towards a distant village.</p>

There are no less than five landscapes known by this name. Four of them are in the National Gallery, London; but one of them, that from the Vernon Collection, is generally described elsewhere as "Waggon and Horses passing a Brook." The other "Watering Place" is privately owned. It is composed of a group of cattle drinking, a fallen tree, a man and peasant girl, and another figure on a slope of the ground.

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## Appendix III.

## Appendix IV.

### Sales of Gainsborough's Works.

GAINSBOROUGH'S pictures have caused some of the greatest sensations in the London sale-rooms. In the prices paid at auction for portrait paintings, this master long held the record. His famous "Duchess of Devonshire," which in 1876 fetched the highest sum ever bid for a likeness at a public sale, achieved, a quarter of a century later, nearly double the money when disposed of privately. This famous portrait and one or two other pictures by Gainsborough for which high prices have been obtained, have been declared to be of doubtful authenticity; but discussion on the matter seems to be in the nature of the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy.

Apart from the high values which Gainsborough's works have often reached, as it were, by bounds, it is important to notice that progressive prices have in many cases been obtained at the latest auctions. The "boom" in "Gainsboroughs" which came over the sale-rooms when the "Duchess of Devonshire" suddenly bewitched the dealers, seems, therefore, to be still maintained.

The principal auctions at which "Gainsboroughs" have been disposed of have been carried out by Messrs. Christie—a fitting coincidence, seeing that Gainsborough himself was acquainted with Mr. Christie, the founder of the firm, and painted his portrait.

The following record of sales and prices is drawn chiefly from Messrs. Christie's catalogues, but Redford's two volumes of *Art Sales* and Slater's annual *Art Sales for the Year* have also been consulted. It is only in specially interesting cases that it has been thought necessary to mention sales in which values denoted by less than four figures were obtained.

The greatest difficulty in compiling the table has arisen from the fact that Gainsborough often painted an identical subject time after time. Moreover, he cared little for the precise naming of his works and rarely signed or dated them.

## Appendix IV.

No.	SUBJECT.	PRICE.	DATE OF SALE.	REMARKS.
1	The Duchess of Devonshire	20,000 gns.	1901	The record price for a portrait. Bought privately by Mr. Pierpont Morgan from Mr. Agnew. The same picture was sold at the famous Wynn Ellis sale in 1876 for 10,100 gns.—a sum which was for long the highest figure ever reached by a portrait at auction. In 1841 Mr. Wynn Ellis paid only £63 for it.
2	Lady Mulgrave	10,000 "	1895	This was included in the celebrated Price Collection, sold June 15, 1895, and following days. In 1882 the picture fetched 1,070 gns.
3	The Sisters	9,500 "	1887	In 1873 the price was 6,300 gns.
4	Lady in White Muslin, with Yellow Trimming	9,000 "	1903	One of the most sensational sales of the year; the picture is said to have lacked a purchaser at £5 before reaching Christie's. The merits were there suspected, but nevertheless the bidding started at 200 gns.
5	Mrs. Drummond of Stanmore	6,700 "	1893	—
6	The Artist's Daughters, called "Mrs. Lane" and Miss Gainsborough	5,600 "	1903	In 1864 sold for 112 gns., and in 1888 for 200 gns.



# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

No.	SUBJECT.	PRICE.	DATE OF SALE.	REMARKS.
7	Dorothea, Lady Eden	5,000 gns.	1896	Thus the title in Messrs. Christie's catalogue of the sale for May 26, 1894. The piece is also known as the "Harvest Waggon" and "The Return from Harvest"; Gainsborough painted precisely the same subject at least three times. One of these, "Harvest Waggon," is now in the possession of Lord Tweedmouth, and was originally given by Gainsborough to Wiltshire the carrier, for taking his pictures to London. Wiltshire's descendants had the picture till 1867, when it was sold for £3,097 10s.
8	Hon. Mrs. Henry Fane	4,850 "	1887	
9	Mrs. Puget ( <i>née</i> Hawkins)	4,800 "	1897	
10	The Market Cart	4,500 "	1894	
11	Lord A. Hamilton	4,200 "	1890	Sold in 1870 for £787 10s.
12	View near King's Bromley	3,600 "	1894	A second portrait of (2). The present picture appeared again at auction in 1897, and fetched only 1,020 gns.
13	Lady Mulgrave	3,500 "	1895	
14	Landscape: Rustics on a road; church in distance	3,300 "	1875	

## Appendix IV.

15	Schockerwick, near Bath	3,110 gns.	1896	Three cows, goat in foreground, by a pool; distant hilly landscape.
16	Madame Le Brun	3,100 "	1894	The Montrose sale. The picture was bought in. It was sold in the following year for £2,150.
17	Mrs. Sheridan	3,000 "	1872	Apparently not identical with (8).
18	Hon. Mrs. Henry Fane, of Fulbeck	2,900 "	1888	The present picture was stated in the sale catalogue to have been painted about 1778, and to have remained in the family till this sale in 1888; whereas (8) was sold in 1887.
18a	Pastoral landscape	2,900 "	1904	River flowing from rocky height; shepherd and flock on bank; village among the hills. The C. F. Huth sale.
18b	Lady Mary Impey	2,800 "	1904	
19	Landscape: Peasants and colliers on horses on hillside, with trees; early morning	2,700 "	1883	The picture is also called "Going to Market."
19a	Frederick, Duke of York	2,500 "	1904	The C. F. Huth sale. Fetched 66 gns. at the E. Bicknell sale in 1863.
20	The Mushroom Girl	2,450 "	1891	From the Gainsborough Dupont Collection.
20a	William Pitt	2,300 "	1904	Oval; in dark blue coat. The C. F. Huth sale.

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

No.	SUBJECT.	PRICE.	DATE OF SALE.	REMARKS:
21	Isaac Henrique Sequeira, M.D.	2,150 gns.	1901	—
22	Mr. Ozier in blue coat and vest	2,150 "	1903	—
23	Mr. and Mrs. Dehaney and daughter	2,100 "	1896	Bought in at a sale in 1880 for £459 10s.; and again in 1882 for £157 10s.
24	Viscount Mountmorres	2,000 "	1895	Price Collection.
25	Lady Clarges	2,000 "	1895	Price Collection. Sold again in 1898 for 1,850 guineas. In 1878 the price was 350 guineas.
26	Mrs. Palmer ( <i>née</i> Gascoigne)	1,940 "	1901	Companion portrait of Mr. Palmer fetched only £52 10s.
27	Mrs. Hallam	1,780 "	1901	—
28	Landscape: Cattle and figures	£1,800	1867	This was one of the pictures given by Gainsborough to Wiltshire, the carrier.
29	Samuel Whitbread, M.P.	1,750 gns.	1896	—
30	Horses drinking at a Spring	1,620 "	1887	Earl of Lonsdale's Collection.
31	Richard Tickell	1,550 "	1874	—
32	Alexander, Duke of Hamilton	1,500 "	1890	—
33	Lady Mary Bowlby	1,450 "	1896	—
34	C. F. Abel, German musician	1,400 "	1892	Sold again for 1,200 guineas in 1897. Considered by Gainsborough himself to be his best work. Horace Walpole said of it, "Very like and well," "The

# Appendix IV.

35	Repose ( <i>chef d'œuvre</i> ), also called "Evening"	1,400 gns.	1895	From the Price Collection. In 1851 it sold for 900 gns., in 1863 for 780 gns., in 1872 and 1898 again for 900 gns. Given by Gainsborough as a marriage gift to his daughter. Bought in.
36	Horses watering at a Trough	1,300 "	1879	
37	Youth in Blue Dress holding his Hat	1,240 "	1892	Also called "A Page"; not the famous "Blue Boy."
37a	Mrs. Richards	1,200 "	1904	Wife of a musician, said to have been first violin at Drury Lane. Painted in 1768.
38	Mary, wife of Sir Robert Carr	1,190 "	1893	---
39	Wood Scene, with figures (Cornard Wood)	1,150 "	1875	Bought for the National Gallery, London.
40	Woody Lane. Peasant walking in foreground; felled trees to the left; in middle distance two donkeys on grass slope; church and buildings beyond	1,150 "	1900	---
41	Cattle, Peasants on Banks of River	£1,102 12s.	1874	Sold in 1856 for £204 15s.
42	Miss Cholmley	1,070 gns.	1882	
43	The Market Cart	1,050 "	1829	Bought by the British Institution,

# Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

No.	SUBJECT.	PRICE.	DATE OF SALE.	REMARKS.
44	Rustic Landscape	1,030 gns.	1872	and afterwards presented to the National Gallery, London. — Bought for the National Gallery, London. Bought by Sir J. Reynolds, and sold by him to M. Calonne for 300 gns. At the latter's sale in 1795 it realised £185. Writing in 1786 to the Earl of Ossory, Reynolds says: "Gainsborough's 'Girl and Pigs' is by far the best picture that he ever painted, or perhaps ever will." It is said that Sir Joshua paid 100 guineas for it, though Gainsborough only asked 60 guineas. — Sketch in black and white chalk. The C. F. Huth sale. Bought by Lord Gainsborough at the sale which took place after the artist's death at Schomberg House. It perished by fire at Exton Park.
45	Duchess of Grafton	£1,018	1883	
46	Mrs. Siddons	£1,000	1862	
47	Girl with Pigs	800 gns.	1894	
47a	David Garrick	700 "	1904	Sketch in black and white chalk. The C. F. Huth sale. Bought by Lord Gainsborough at the sale which took place after the artist's death at Schomberg House. It perished by fire at Exton Park.
47b	Duchess of Devonshire	500 "	1904	
48	Woodman and Dog in a Storm	£500	1789	



## Appendix IV.

49	Parish Clerk	£325 10s.	1867	Bought for the National Gallery, London.
50	Waggon and Horse passing a Brook.	£231	1832.	Now in the National Gallery, London. From the John Ewer Collection; bought by Mr. Ver- non, and bequeathed by him to the British nation. It was a favourite work with the artist, who kept it till his death. Mr. John Ewer bought it at the sale at Gainsborough's London house in 1789.

## Appendix V.

### A Bibliography of Gainsborough.

GAINSBOROUGH'S well-known aversion from any kind of writing, and the peculiar heedlessness which often marked his relations to his fellow-artists, as well as to men of letters, are not wholly to be regretted from the point of view of biography. The silence of the artist himself on his own life and works has proved a stimulus to the activity of writers, and several "Lives" of Gainsborough have in consequence been undertaken, which have all served to quicken, from time to time, the feeling of interest in his personal character. Nor has æsthetic criticism been much the loser by the painter's carelessness in respect of himself. His neglect to sign and date his work has, in particular, left to the critics some good ground for controversy as to the periods represented by particular paintings in the order of the development of Gainsborough's genius.

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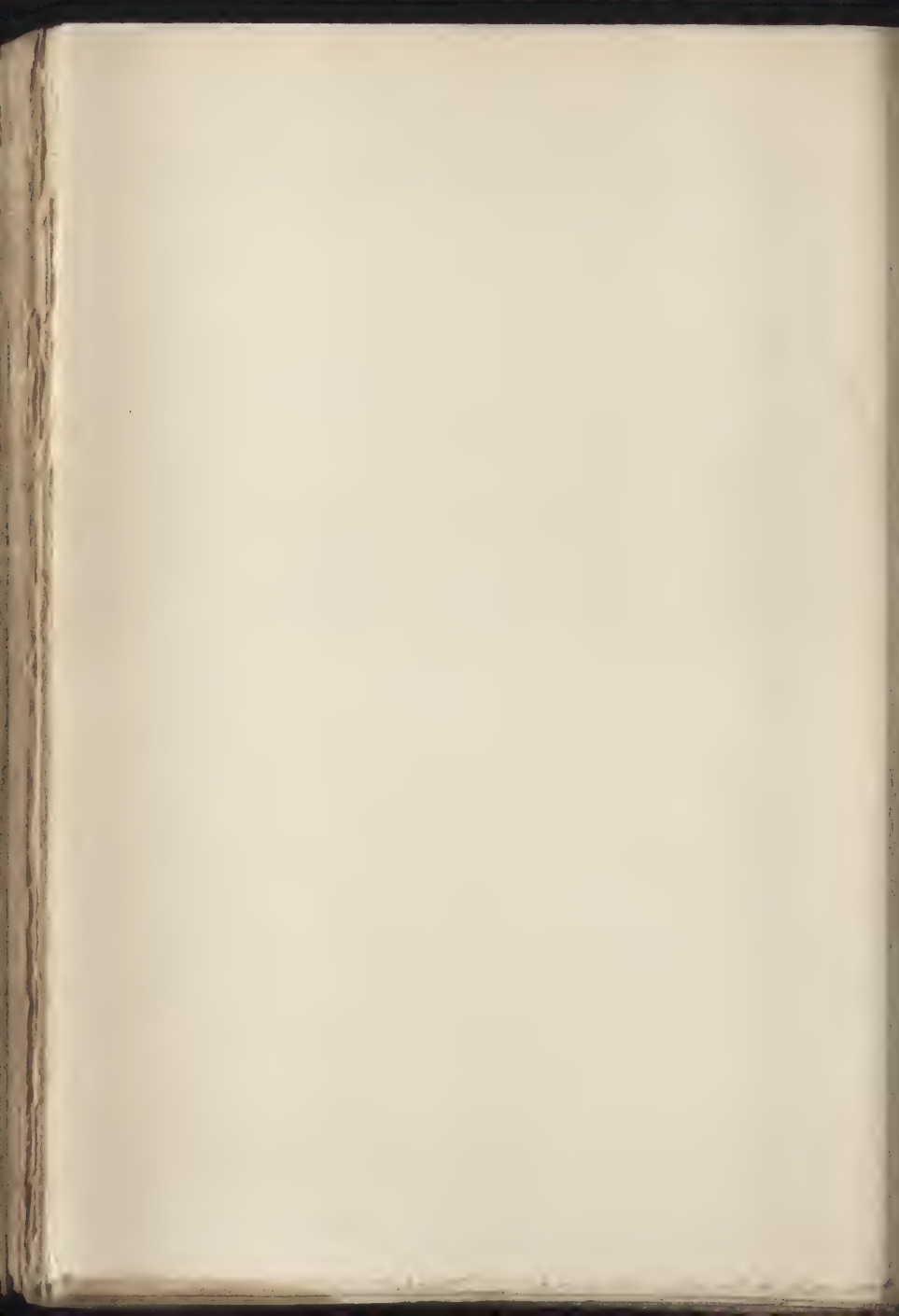
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Most of the works cited can be consulted at the Art Library of the South Kensington Museum. Admission by weekly ticket, 6d.; monthly, 1s. 6d.; or yearly, 10s.





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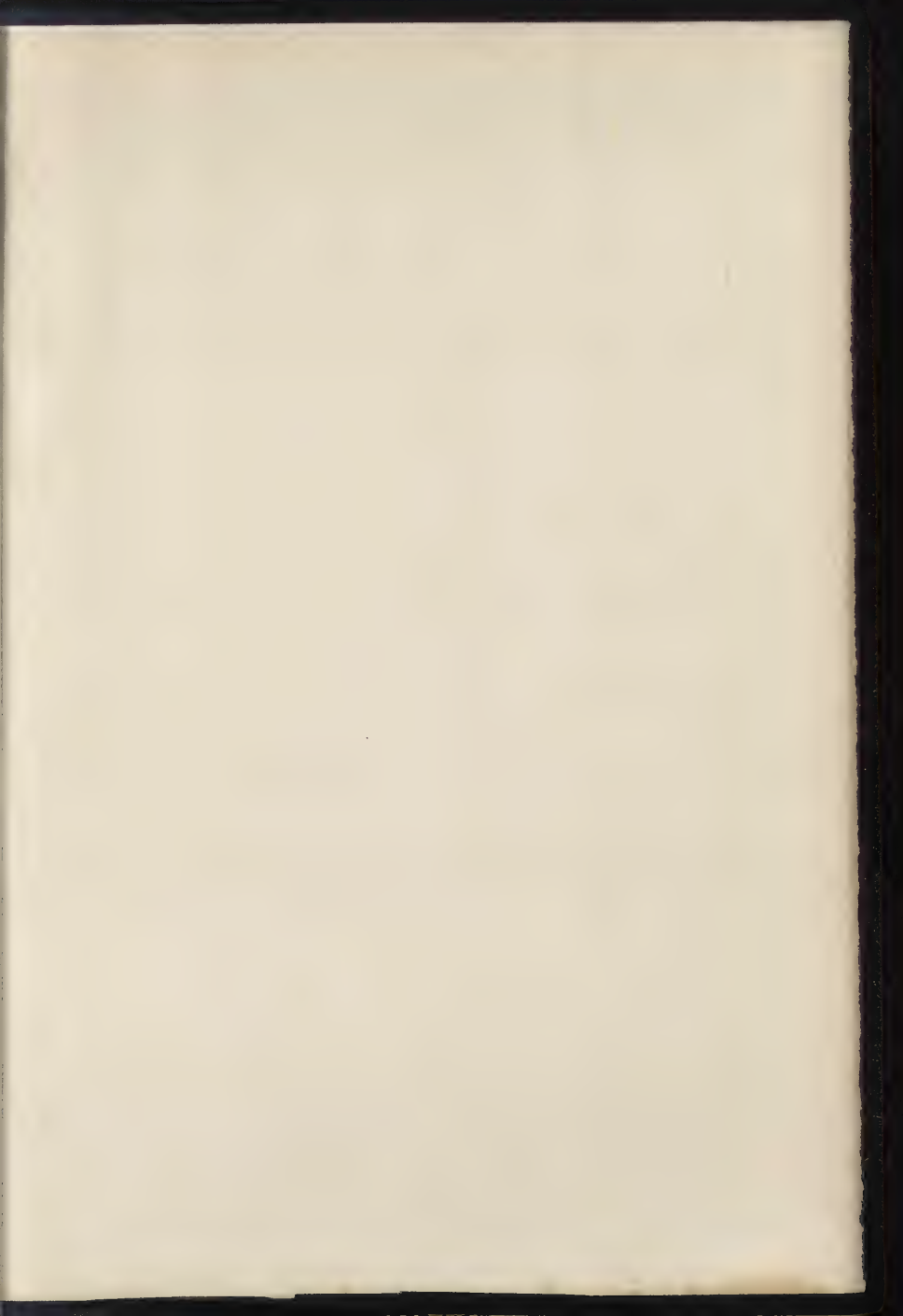
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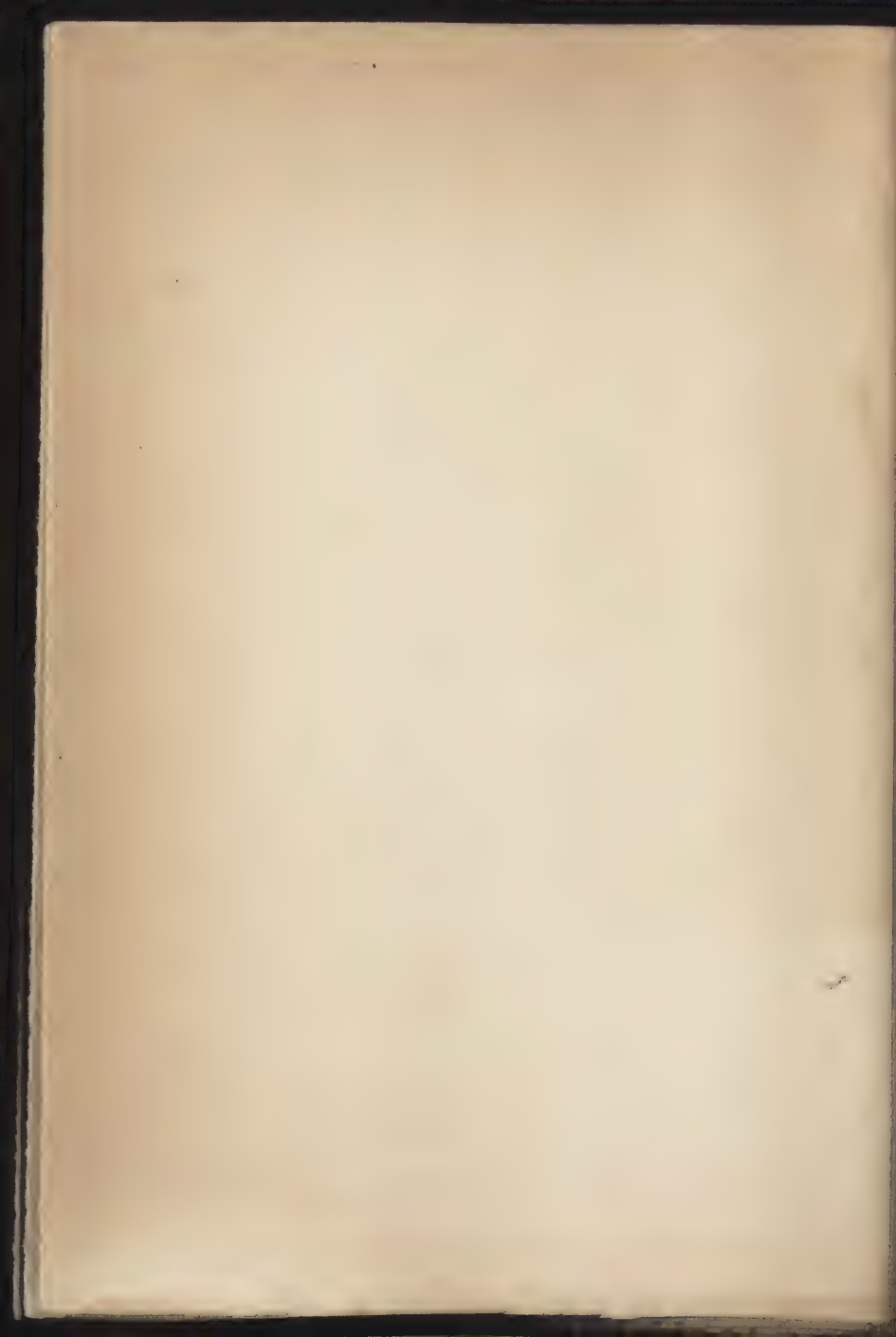
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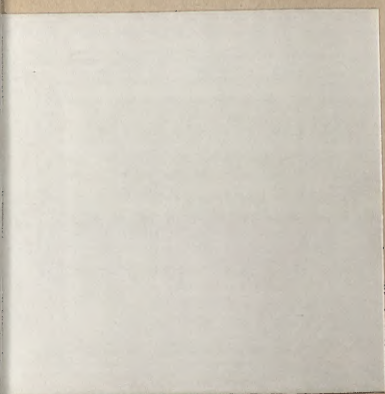
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